Interview with Gary S. Usrey

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

GARY S. USREY

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Q: Let's start at the beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born, and a little about your family?

USREY: I was born on September 18, 1948, at a Marine Corps air station in Cherry Point, North Carolina. My father was a marine pilot. He had enlisted in the marines after high school graduation. He grew up in rural, central Tennessee, near Nashville. My mother was from eastern Tennessee, Johnson City, Kingsport area. He came in as an eager recruit. He liked to tell the story that when he went to the recruiting station in Nashville, he didn't weigh enough to get in. He wanted to be a pilot. He was three pounds below the minimum. He went down to the corner fruit stand, and ate four bananas and a couple apples, and went to the water fountain, and drank about a gallon of water, and went back and got in. But, later he was commissioned as an officer, and got into flight school. Ultimately, he ended up flying President Eisenhower's helicopter, Marine. I. You know, that squad that lands on the White House lawn. We didn't live in Cherry Point very long. We went to Guam shortly thereafter, for a few months. Then, briefly, we were in Hawaii, and then southern California, for several years.

Q: Well, let's go back a bit. What do you know about your father'early life, and where the Usrey's came from?

USREY: We've always been told that the “Usrey” name is Scotch-Irish. I haven't done any research in that regard, but the name is somewhat common in the south. You run into Usreys now almost always in Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee. The story that came down is that they came, for the most part, from Ireland in the 18th century, and intermarried with Scotch immigrants too. My grandfather worked for the railroads. My father, having been born in 1920, grew up mostly in the depression. It was really tough. It was rural, in Kingston Springs, Tennessee. There was a lot of hunting, fishing, stuff that didn't cost very much. The military was a way out, I suppose.

Q: Did he get through high school?

USREY: Yes, he graduated high school, which in those days, was aachievement.

Q: It really was.

USREY: He met my mother Shirley by accident in the Washington area. She came up, as so many women did, to work for the expanding government. They were married in 1945. She had worked with Wild Bill Donovan at the OSS, wherever that was located in those days. I think it was across the street from the State Department.

Q: I think so. There used to be a dairy there.

USREY: Oh really? So, they met somehow. I never got those details. They got married in 1945. My dad went to Wooster, Ohio for some training, some academic training. They moved around a little bit. I don't think they went overseas together until Guam.

Q: Did you have a feel for, on your mother's side of the family,what their name was and where they came from?

USREY: It was “Vogner” or Wagner, which reminds me of a joke when I grew up about how one eats German-Chinese food, and two hours later, one's hungry for power. But, my grandfather worked in a small bank, in rural eastern Tennessee. I think her mother's side of the family was from Indiana. How they made their way to Tennessee, I'm not clear on. I should check one day.

Q: Did she get through high school, college?

USREY: She did, and went to a business college then, studying stenography and all that. She was really adept at what was then an emerging skill, typing and dictation, all that stuff. She was working in Washington, got an apartment, had a roommate, and worked for the government.

Q: Did you grow up, more or less, as a marine kid, were the“brats,” or what did they call them?

USREY: Yes, I guess we were “brats.”

Q: Or juniors? Is it Navy juniors, and army brats?

USREY: And marines, who knows what? Leather neck juniors, or something like that. We lived on or near bases. When my dad was at El Toro, in southern California, he built his first house, in what was then Tustin, near what later became Disneyland. I have fond memories of that. We weren't on the base then. Then, he was reassigned to Pensacola, Florida and we lived off-base there, for four years, and then up to Quantico, Virginia. I went to third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade there, I think. We lived on the base there, in officer's quarters. The Marine Corps was always present.

Q: As a young lad, did you get what one thinks of the classic marine corps, junior business, snapping to attention? You think of the great... There was a movie, book...

USREY: I know what you are talking about.

Q: Anyway, snapping to, and that sort of thing? Did that permeate the house, or not?

USREY: Dad was a pretty strict disciplinarian. They were both from the south, and this was the 1950s. You said, “Yes, Ma'am,” and “No, Sir,” to your parents. This is something that my wife later found pretty quaint. She was from Connecticut, and they didn't do that. My kids certainly don't say that now. He could be pretty tough. We did some stupid things, and got severely punished, as we should have been, for whatever it was. For instance, setting an orange grove on fire, in southern California one time. We burned all these houses, and thousands of dollars worth of citrus trees down. It's hard to separate what was southern traditional in that way, and what was the marine corps, but it was clear he was molded by the marine corps, the physical part. He was a pretty tough physical specimen, too.

Q: Do you have brothers, sisters?

USREY: I have one brother.

Q: Older, younger?

USREY: Four years younger. He lives in the Mesa, Phoenix area oArizona.

Q: In going to elementary school, what did you like to do, as far asubjects, interests, sports or anything like that?

USREY: I always liked sports. I played Little League. Living on or connected to a base meant that it was also always an organized activity scene. I pitched in Little League for four years, and was on the basketball team. Academically, speaking, I remember something very interesting. I think it was in the fourth grade, when we had an exchange student from Argentina. He was on the base, so it must have been that his father was an

exchange officer from Buenos Aires or something, and at Quantico, for some reason. He was there for a year. His name was Guillermo. I will never forget when we were making salt maps, relief maps together. I guess it is salt, and dough, and flour. I became extremely interested in Argentina, and his life overseas. This to me was fascinating that there was a kid in our class who wasn't from America. I learned a lot from him. My horizons were extended quite a bit with that. Other than that, it was pretty normal. We got a TV, more or less, when people got TVs.

One thing that was different - my grandfather, my mother's father, Mr. Wagner, as we called him, after being widowed, was living in the Dodge Hotel in Washington. In those days, you could take up residence in a hotel. I rode the streetcar with him to Griffith Stadium, and we saw Harmon Killebrew and the Senators play in the old wooden stadium. This would have been in the mid to late 1950s. Anyway, he moved in with us, and lived with our family in Quantico. He was an avid reader of the paper, particularly the sports. He knew all the stuff about baseball. It was 1961 when Roger Maris broke Babe Ruth's home run record. We watched that season go on, looking at the table of averages, and all that stuff. Not many kids had that kind of experience.

Q: How about at the dinner table? Were ideas battered around? Diyou get any feel for where your family stood on issues?

USREY: Yes, there was a lot of talk at the dinner table. I guess I was pretty inquisitive. I remember asking impossible to answer questions like, “How far would the bullet go in wood?” It was an era where you watched a lot of war movies. World War II was a pretty important part of recent memory, even though I wasn't alive during that. My Dad, being a pilot, I always got him to talk about airplanes. There was a lot of that. Fairly early on, it became clear my father had some racist views. The “N” word was used. I don't think my mother was very comfortable with that. She was from the south too, and had heard it a lot. I don't know if she was shocked, but she probably didn't approve of it. So, there was a lot of that, which made me very scrupulous about never speaking like that with my own

children. Living in the Washington area in the early 1960s, there was a lot of ferment and social turmoil. There was usually something to comment on. He didn't hesitate on giving a pretty biased view. I remember that.

Q: Each generation kind of looks at the older generation and shudders. I can see my daughter shuddering at some things I say. I kind of look at her like, “What?”

USREY: “I'm normal, what about you?” What was PC then...

Q: PC meaning politically correct.

USREY: What was PC then, is quite different from today. My mother had a pretty traditional role. She didn't work. She was subservient to my father because of his somewhat overbearing presence.

Q: Marines are trained to be that way.

USREY: We had a ready-made life on the base. My mother had friends, and there was stuff to do. There was bridge. Apart from the military aspect, it was a reasonably normal upbringing.

Q: What about reading? Did you find that you read much, or not? Dyou recall?

USREY: I was a tremendous reader. I loved to read. I somehow let a very valuable collection of comic books get away. I don't know where it went. Both my parents are dead now. Every week, I got a dollar allowance. We would ride our bikes down the hill, about two miles to the Rexall Drugstore, and would get The World's Finest and Superman and Batman, and adventure comics. You could walk away with a dime a shot, and have about seven comics a week. You could get a coke, and a Reeses butter cup, or something. Over 50 weeks, you could get a lot of stuff. I had a very interesting collection of the Walt Disney comics. Some of those were great stories. I also had Tom Swift and all the Hardy Boys stuff. I was a good reader in school, an avid reader. I even read the newspaper. In fact, we

got an encyclopedia set on installment. Where your mother goes to the store, to get one, and then you get one the next week. What was the name of it?

Q Colliers?

USREY: It wasn't Colliers, something like that. I still have it. It's on my bookshelf in the basement. I would read that from cover to cover. I read a lot. I really did.

Q: During your time with the Argentine lad, did you want to reaabout far away places? Like, Jack London's Tales, and other things.

USREY: Yes, I was influenced by that stuff. The British writers, like Graham Greene, later on. Later on, my father went with President Eisenhower to South America... Was that the Good Neighbor Policy, maybe?

Q: Well, it was called by various things.

USREY: Maybe that was Kennedy's job. Anyhow, he went down there. There were stories about Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, and the beauty of it, flying over the Pampas. They were in the helicopter supporting the President's entourage. After I was born, before my brother was born, my father was in Japan over a year, separated from my mother. I don't really remember much about that period. He had brought some swords back, and some silk stuff, and furniture. Mostly because of my avid reading, I was a geography nut. I knew the height, and still do, of all the major mountains in the world. You would have had a hard time stumping me. The stuff in Africa, the Andes, I knew all the heights. We had maps of the states, and I knew all the capitals. Geography was the thing that interested me. It took me to foreign countries. I studied climate zones, Koeppen's climate classifications, all that stuff.

Q: Where did you start high school?

USREY: I went to high school at Thomas Edison in Alexandria. My graduating class was the first one that had gone all four years to the new school. It was one of these new suburban high schools that was built. I went to high school all four years there.

Q: How did you find it at that time? This was from when to when?

USREY: This was 1962 to 1966. I graduated in 1966.

Q: Were you caught in the middle of the integration business?

USREY: No.

Q: Had they integrated by that time?

USREY: Yes. I remember on the football team, I had a great teammate named Earl. There were some blacks, but busing hadn't happened. There certainly was no segregation. It reflected the neighborhood around it. Edison was a pretty good school then. I don't know much about it now. Do you live in that area?

Q: I live in Annandale. My wife, at one point, was at Edison. Shwas an English teacher there, or at least a substitute teacher.

USREY: Annandale was a football powerhouse during my years. They won the state championship a couple times. They were horrendous. We even had a good team one year, and you all still won. I didn't find the student body of Edison to be reflective of anything in particular. It was pretty homogenous. If you look at the yearbook now, you see names... That guy was Arab American, you know. You didn't realize then, they might have been Finnish or something. But, basically, it was overwhelmingly white, middle-class.

Q: Did you get involved in any activities there while in high school?

USREY: Yes.

Q: What sort of things did you do?

USREY: I was the president of the Spanish National Honor Society, or something pretty close to that. I was a very good student. In Spanish, I got straight As. In my senior year, I was named president of the Spanish National Honor Society. I was on the wrestling team. I was pretty good at that. I was a defensive back on the football team. I was pretty small, but managed to play for a couple years. I played on the golf team for one year. That and Spanish kept me pretty occupied. In those days, you weren't programmed entirely around school. We kids would come home, and take a B.B. gun or a bow and arrow, and go in the woods. That was the way you amused yourself. You weren't taken to soccer, chess and stuff. When sports came up at the high school level, I was pretty involved.

Q: Was there any particular reason why you got so involved iSpanish?

USREY: The choices at the time were French, Spanish, German. French seemed maybe too foreign, or too impractical. It might have been the Argentine thing. I can't recall, but I took Spanish, and did very well in it. The teacher, Dean Hinton was his name... No relation to this other Foreign Service officer, who was Dean Hinton. But, he was a great teacher. We got these stories of Gil Blas. Gil Blas was a Spanish character from northern Spain. We got these things. I guess he got them from Spain. He went there to study. We had high quality instructional things. I really took off in Spanish. I got off foreign service language probation in Arabic first. Then I got a 4/4 in Spanish. I still have it roughly at that level. I am very comfortable in Spanish.

Q: When you were in high school, what did you think you might do?

USREY: I wasn't one who knew from the get-go whether I wanted to be an engineer, or whatever. I couldn't even decide where I wanted to go to college. As I mentioned, I did very well in wrestling, in my senior year. It was enough so that the William and Mary wrestling coach... Not exactly a wrestling powerhouse, but anyway, he was at the state

tournament where I was wrestling. He offered me a grant in aid at William and Mary, if I could get accepted, which I did. I also got accepted at Virginia, but I decided to go to Maryland, out of state. This was because our football team had taken a trip there for a game. I was impressed with the campus. At that point, I thought I was going to be pre-med. I was pretty strong in math. So, I entered Maryland, planning to be a pre-med student. I took organic chemistry, calculus, and all that stuff. I didn't last long in that. It was no fun. So, at some point, I must have thought about pre-med. Maybe it was my senior year, but I can't recall. I wasn't driven to be a pilot like my dad. In fact, the more I saw the marine life, and my dad's overbearing discipline, it was one thing I didn't want to do. Vietnam came, and that was the last thing anybody wanted to do in those days.

Q: You graduated from high school in what year, now?

USREY: 1966.

Q: So, Vietnam was beginning to come up. Did you find yourself, as you got into college, getting on either side of the Vietnam conflict? I'm talking about the one in the United States?

USREY: I did. I was torn, I think. At least, if not torn, I straddled a couple lines, because in my sophomore year, I joined a fraternity. It was a lot of Madras shirts, penny loafers, and all that stuff. It was a pretty conservative group, in retrospect. I didn't join it because it was conservative, but it seemed like the life I wanted to have. Yet, I was alert and aware enough to be attuned to the war and its basically flawed premise. I was very sympathetic to a lot of the social protests. The SDS had a chapter there. That never appealed to me. But, I can remember marching in some marches down College Drive, right near where I lived. So, I was sort of in two worlds. Then, I would go and have a beer afterwards. I was aware and opinionated about it. I was lucky enough to get a high draft number. I don't remember what year that lottery was. It was probably 1967. My birthday is September 18th. I think the first two dates pulled out of the barrel were for September. My mother was

going through paroxysms of fear at home. She was thinking I was going to get drafted. I got 255 or something, a very high number. I never had to face the decision. I don't know what I would have done. We talked about it a lot. Whether I would have gone to Canada. I probably would have gone to Vietnam, although it would have been a tough one. I'm not sure what I would have done. It was a real issue for me.

Q: What happened, from your observation, during this time... Thitakes up 1970, doesn't it?

USREY: Yes, I got out in 1970.

Q: What was happening on the Maryland campus on Vietnam? It's not one of the firebrand universities.

USREY: It's not Wisconsin or Berkeley, or Wellesley, or Columbia. It's a big state university, but it is big, and it has a diverse... Thirty-thousand kids over there at the time, and you had the whole spectrum. There were chapters of all mainstream political organizations there. There were some nasty protests that involved damage. What's the name of the bookstore down there on Route 1? Anyway, the Maryland bookstore got trashed during a protest. I don't know which side did it, maybe both. But, they tore it up. There was the threat that we might not graduate. It was my senior year. I remember my big fear being that we have this big war, and that's bad enough, people dying. It was extremely unpopular, socially, by then. But, I was worried about not graduating. I was quite concerned. It was a real issue, where there was enough of a disruption, enough classes to be suspended, that the degrees would not be awarded on time. I remember that. I think your question was how did it affect my life. So, in that way, it did. There were some marches which I took part in. They were big ones. I never grabbed the bullhorn and jumped up in front of the library myself.

Q: Did you ever get involved in the civil rights movement at all?

USREY: I did not. I don't want to blame my father, but I guess there was some residual mindset coming from him. I also reacted against that, to a certain extent. Martin Luther King at that time was... I remember going over to the tent city on the Mall. Remember they had that mud bath over there along the Reflecting Pool?

Q: I remember seeing that. It was some sort of village osomething, People's March or something.

USREY: So, we went over there, and saw it. I was aware of King's leadership and was respectful of that. But, I didn't strongly identify with the civil rights stuff then.

Q: What did you end up majoring in after the pre-med thing

USREY: Psychology with a minor in geography, which was easy for me to do. I had no idea what the hell I was going to do with that. I didn't particularly want to go to grad school right away. So, in the spring of 1970, along with some other people, I took the civil service exam. Somehow, we found out that it was being given nearby in Bladensburg, or something. I got a really high score on that. That was when the government was hiring big time. I would go back to the fraternity a couple weeks afterward, and there would be job offer telegrams in my mail slot, “Interior Department will start you now as a GS-7.” So, I signed up with a program with the Bureau of Customs at Treasury, that was called, Management Intern Program. It would be called PMI now, if you know what that stuff is, Presidential Management Intern, an accelerated promotion training program.

Q: No.

USREY: So, I decided to go with the Customs Bureau as a management intern, which would lead me to become, after two years, a journeyman. I would become a management analyst, in their Bureau of Management.

Q: Why customs? It seems to be an obscure branch of the government,in a way.

USREY: Well, they offered a higher rate than some of the others. They offered a GS-7, which was pretty good money in those days, with a nine the next year, and an eleven the next year. I was a GS-12 when I was 22. I got promoted pretty fast. Then, I joined the Foreign Service. It was also in Washington. I had just gotten married that summer. My wife and I had an apartment in College Park. She had begun to teach. I didn't want to go live in Omaha, or wherever these other things were.

Q: What was the background of your wife?

USREY: She was born in New York, and grew up in Connecticut. Her father was... You're old enough to remember the Pathe newsreels, before the movies. He was the vice president of Pathe News. They lived in Darien, in a big house on the Long Island Sound. Their next door neighbors were the Lindberghs, Charles Lindbergh. They were pretty loaded. Her father got MS. He accepted a political job in the Truman administration, as Commissioner of the Flood Administration. He came down here and got MS.

Q: Multiple sclerosis.

USREY: Slowly over time, he stopped working. The family insurance didn't have it or it was inadequate, and not well managed. They lived in Georgetown, but had to move out to Chevy Chase. They eventually took an apartment in Bethesda. My wife's older sisters married and went off. But, they had come down to Washington with their father for that job.

Q: Did she attend the University of Maryland?

USREY: Yes. We met there in Art History class. We dated about the last three years of my college time there. We were ready to get married. People were doing that, getting married the summer after graduating. We did it too. We are still married. So, to answer, why Customs, I don't know, I didn't give it much analysis. I didn't yet have a developed

interest in Foreign Affairs. I didn't look to the State Department for internships. I wasn't very organized that way.

Q: Well then, so you went to Customs? This was 1970?

USREY: Yes.

Q: You worked for them for how long? USREY: Three years, 1970 to 1973.

Q: What was your impression of the atmosphere at Customs? Who werthe people? How was the work viewed, and all that?

USREY: It was one of the few agencies that returned money to the Treasury. It's like the IRS, it takes in money, and provides a net profit. It provided a big one to the government. It's an old agency. I think it is as old as at least the U.S. Government. There might have been a Customs service, even before the Continental Congress.

Q: It must have been.

USREY: So, there was all that historical stuff. I wasn't terribly impressed with that. It soon became clear to me that I could not go very far in Customs. It was basically an agency of support around their customs agents. The people who go to the very top are agents who were in the ports, but know the tariff schedules, who were involved in all that kind of stuff. I was in the management end of it. So, I knew I would not make a career out of it. I have to tell you, I was riding that DC transit bus back and forth from College Park, downtown every day. I thought, “I could be doing this for 30 years.” It was really boring. So, when I became aware of the Foreign Service, I took the Foreign Service exam. The written exam was offered in December.

Q: It used to be the first Saturday in December, I think.

USREY: So, I must have taken it already, in December 1972. I already knew by then that I wanted to get out of Customs. I just barely missed getting the minimum score on the written. So, I took it again the next year. It must have been December 1972. I passed it, and took the orals, early in 1973, and I got in. I joined early that summer. I went from Customs straight over to what was then FSI, over in Rossyln.

Q: Do you recall how the oral exam went, any of the questions?

USREY: It seemed extremely undirected or subjective. There were four guys in a room with a huge map of the world. One guy had a pointer, or maybe they all had pointers. They asked me what the most impressive book was that I had read in the last six months, and what was my taste in TV shows. I remember one particularly scary question. The guy pointed to the Rio Grande and said, “Please name all the democracies south of the Rio Grande in the western hemisphere,” and there weren't very many. So, I thought it was pretty subjective and didn't seem very structured. I guess I was probably right, because I later worked for the Board of Examiners, and they were a lot more structured. But, I must have shown a minimum degree of poise. In those days, you walked down the hall after you were done, and you found out the result. They huddled and did an assessment. They said I had passed. Then, we had security and medical stuff. But, it seemed very subjective and somewhat subject to bias. But I didn't feel that was exercised toward me.

Q: While you were at Customs, were you picking up ideas about whathe Foreign Service does, and what it is about?

USREY: Yes.

Q: What attracted you toward it?

USREY: Actually, it was the travel. I think at that point I realized that I did not want to spend the rest of my young, and then middle-age life on a bus back and forth to some bureaucratic job. I didn't think the work was very interesting at Customs, but I was getting

well paid. My wife and I were making enough to go out to dinner two, three times a week, and have vacations in Europe. We didn't have any kids then, and didn't own a house either. But, I didn't want to do it very long. I didn't like it. I did want to travel. We had gone to Europe the first summer after we got married, on some charter flight thing at her school. Her Maryland Education Association had sponsored it. I really liked that. I think I was mostly attracted to the itinerant nature of it. The burning question of foreign policy, in effect, I didn't see where I could really influence it that much at that stage. I think the young officers today really think they can come in and work with Secretary Powell directly, and influence policy. I think they're crazy. Some manage, I suppose. I didn't have a very foreign-policy oriented view of the Foreign Service. It was more the travel and lifestyle.

Q: So, you came in in 1973?

USREY: Right.

Q: I assume you took the A100 course?

USREY: Yes.

Q: How did that strike you, the people in it, and the course itself?

USREY: I really liked it. The esprit was high. People were all terribly excited. We had all just gotten in, and we were all going to different places. Shortly after the end of the course, we knew where everyone was going. People were obviously bright. We had good speakers to come talk to us. It was a time of real optimism. It was really exciting. I am still friends with a number of my A100 colleagues. Do you know Bob Gribbin.

Q: Yes.

USREY: We still play golf. We played a couple weeks ago. I see some of my old buddies, Gene Schmiel? Do you know Gene?

Q: No.

USREY: He used to teach the A100 course later. He's not downtown. He had an intern program. Anyhow, it was a lot of fun. It was the most exciting thing. Then, we got scheduled for language training, and all that stuff. We had consular training.

Q: How did the consular training go, because this is often a coldose of reality, when you are learning the consular regulations?

USREY: What's now called ConGen Rosslyn had not been developed yet, so it was basically thumbing through the manuals. You were given three massive FAMs. It was a lot like law school. It was pretty dry and awful. I knew I was going to Baghdad at that point, and I knew I would be the second of two, behind Art Laurie, whom I think you said you knew?

Q: Yes.

USREY: Art was doing the political work, and I was doing the administrative and consular work at the post. That was fine. It seemed good to me. There wasn't much administrative work to do there. So, I didn't expect I would be in a visa mill like in London, where they really use the stuff intensely. In fact, the visa stuff became pretty interesting. I enjoyed that. The citizenship work was really interesting, some of the cases we got in Iraq. But, the course was a terrible, dry sort of uninspiring thing, awful.

Q: Well, Baghdad was your first post. Was that by request or lucof the draw?

USREY: It seems to me that the way it was put to me... I got a 73 on the MLATs, which was deemed to be prime for hard language study. They said, “You have two choices. Either you can go to Adana, Turkey; or Baghdad.” I asked them if I could talk with my wife over night, and let them know. So, we got the map out. There were all of two countries at the time where we had embassies that used Turkish. One was Cyprus, and one was

Ankara. There were plenty of countries where you could speak Arabic. We got the post report. It sounded exotic, and indeed it was. When were you first there?

Q: I've never been to Baghdad.

USREY: It wasn't a hard decision to choose Baghdad. I knew that in Adana we would basically be a passport service for the ancillary air base. I wanted none of that. Also, it's pretty bleak down there. There isn't much to that part of Turkey. They still have something there, I believe. There is still a small post. So, it was pretty easy to choose Baghdad. We were excited.

Q: You were in Baghdad from when to when?

USREY: It was a two-year tour. It's funny, because I was in the six-month Arabic course. I started that around January 1974. I had been doing some other training, regional area studies and all that. FSI had a Shiite Lebanese guy from the Bekaa Valley, who was my teacher. It was a six-month thing, which is meant to get you up to an S -3. No reading was taught in this one. It was a fast course at the time. Then, about two months into the course, we started getting cables from the post and messages from my predecessor, a guy named Ron Main. He was killed years later in a motorcycle accident in South Africa. He was under big pressure from the ambassador in Bahrain, his next post, who I think must have been Joe Twinam, to get there ASAP, to come early. His normal transfer schedule would have overlapped with mine, which Art thought was essential, which was right. So, I didn't get to finish up the Arabic. I finished up at three months at an S-2, which was enough to get off language probation. We raced to Baghdad in April 1974. So, the tour was April 1974 to April 1976. My wife had to leave a little early. She had to beat the eight-month deadline back in...

Q: In 1974, what was the situation there?

USREY: Well, they were actively fighting the Kurdish insurgency in the north, led by Mustafa Barzani. This was a big thing. Arzani was getting, if not material support from Iran, certainly the ability to move back and forth across the border. So, he was able to operate and escape the Iraqi chases. They were trying to track him down out there. So, it was war time. I remember seeing trucks going through at night full of people. I heard later from Abbas, our Kurdish driver, who got tortured and was subject to a lot of trouble at the embassy, that these were Kurds and they were being sent into the south. The president was a man named Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr. Saddam Hussein was number two at the time. This wasn't too long after the Yom Kippur War.

Q: The '73 war.

USREY: Yes. So, we had not reestablished diplomatic relations. We were part of the U.S. Interests intersection of the Belgian embassy. There was no formal relationship, hence the small post. There was a rabidly hostile press. It was unbelievable. It was in the press. I had never seen anything like that before. You heard about the “Zionist entity,” and blaming America for everything, but this was unbelievable. I will never forget, they had on sale at the kiosk in town, you could get Newsweek and you could get Time. The Arab League boycott of Israel was operating heavily then. No Coke, only Pepsi. All that stuff that was on the boycott list was banned. You would buy these magazines. You could get precious little besides the BBC, so you wanted to get your hands on one of these magazines. Every time the word “Israel” had been printed, they had censors that had meticulously scratched it out and had written “Zionist Entity” over it, in every magazine. The amount of work involved there is impressive. It was a police state, as it still is. It was all powerful, and people were scared to death of the security forces. There was this nasty war with the Kurds. It was off a way, it really didn't affect downtown Baghdad, although you could still see blacked out windows. People had in their cars windows painted from the 1973 war, before I got there. They were afraid of air raids, from Israel or something. So, you sort of knew a war was going on. We would get into diplomatic chatter about it, and so forth, but it wasn't

manifested in town, or anything like that. So, we were trying to establish some channels with a very nasty regime that hated us and excoriated us in the papers.

One of the things I worked on was, I had been instructed to try to go in and negotiate a price for... We had withheld some U.S. aid to Iraq... Maybe we had sold them something... Maybe they had paid for something in advance, and we hadn't delivered the product. It was possibly military goods, or something, because of the war. Then in 1973 they seized our embassy. So, we were looking for a barter exchange. I was involved in negotiations with the foreign ministry, to see if we could advance that, which wasn't really moving anywhere. So, it was highly adversarial all the time. In fact, we had our phones tapped, and could hear the Iraqi agents who were monitoring our calls making noises on the line.

I'll give you the flavor of what it was like. My wife signed up for French lessons at the Alliance Fran#aise downtown. She went off to do this French thing, and met a couple. The woman was a Czechoslovakian, and her Iraqi husband had been sent by the regime to study in Czechoslovakia. They got married and came back. They were in this course. They said, “Please come over for drinks with us at our house. We would like to meet your husband.” My wife said, “Well, you know, we're with the U.S. interests section.” “Ah, it's okay, we're not political.” So, after some arm twisting, we agreed. I said we would do it. We had to get directions over to that neighborhood, and parked the car a couple blocks from the house. Our plates were marked with what country it was. They said “United States.” So we wanted to be careful. We went in and had a couple drinks, and some snacks. They were a charming couple. They were clearly thirsty for outside contact. The next day, my wife went to class and these people weren't there. They didn't show up for about three weeks. They had been reached by the security police who said, “Don't ever do that again.” Finally, when they came back to French, they wouldn't talk to my wife. So, they clearly had been reached by the security police. That's the way it was. We were limited almost completely in our contacts with the diplomatic community and ex-patriates, business people.

Q: How did we view the government there? Were we looking at powestruggles? What were we looking at?

USREY: Yes, the power struggles, to the extent we could. We had no intelligence, no way to do it. Washington was very interested in the progress of the Kurdish War. I remember when our desk officer came out. We went up to Mosul, north of Iraq. She had a camera. She brought a camera and lots of rolls of film. We probably could have gotten into some trouble. We took pictures of the MIGs taking off from the airfield right next to Mosul there. Anyway, it was mostly about power struggles. Where was Iraq? There was intimacy between Syria and Iraq, where was that going? Where was the Baath party? Was that fully entrenched and secure? What were the chances of improved relations with the U.S. and Iraq, that sort of stuff? We were only two people. I don't think Washington expected an avalanche of political reporting on it. But, Art did a good job. He did some good reporting.

Q: Now, was he charge?

USREY: Well, no he was not charge because it was only an interests section. You were called principal officer. He was called principal officer.

Q: So, it was just the two of you?

USREY: Yes, just the two of us. Later, we got a third guy. A guy named Patrick Killough, who was the commercial officer. He was about a mid-grade officer. He came about midway through my tour. So, we were up to three. Art's wife was working as the decoder. We had these ancient one time pads. We had all the typing and stuff to do, so she was the classified secretary.

Q: Did you get your news and what was happening? The paper...

USREY: No, they weren't very good. They were all propaganda. They reflected the thinking of the leadership. Of course, we paid attention to it, and drew some inferences

from that. Art and I would get some of our information from key ambassadors. Some were better than others. Art stayed in touch closely with the French ambassador. The British were very good. They had a bigger embassy, and they took us under their wings. We were members of their Oasis Club, which had a pool. For all intents and purposes, we were part of the British embassy family. They had their people who did all kinds of work there. They made it easy for us to get more information than we could have gotten. The Italians were pretty good, I think. I always thought the Spaniards were well informed there. Iraq had a big diplomatic community. It was just beginning to come into its own, in terms of oil money. The big wealth hadn't come in, but given the economic interest there, Baghdad had a large foreign diplomatic presence. So, every country was represented. The Papal Nuncio was pretty well informed, we found out. He had good access. We just picked up those nuggets and the crumbs from where we could, and did the best we could. That's all that was expected. I had a little budget. We kept the vehicle fleet running. I used to have to go to the Rafidain Bank, and get our cash transfers. In fact, we would take a briefcase and fill it with these dinars. It was pretty primitive stuff. We were out almost every night, at some diplomatic function. Sometimes, there were two a night. My wife and I were having fun. We thought it was exciting. I had never seen any other kind of operation, so I thought that was pretty normal. I realized later how unusual it was, for instance, when I got to Argentina.

Q: On the consular side, what were you doing

USREY: In retrospect, what I was seeing was a pretty steady trickle of people, minorities, like Coptic Christians, who wanted the hell out of there. There was a growing community in places like the Detroit area, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, because it was a place where they were concentrated. There were Armenians. There was a huge Armenian neighborhood in Baghdad. We went to a wedding there once; it was like Armenian city, another Baghdad. There was a very rapidly dwindling ancient Jewish community there. So, almost all the Jews had gone before. So, I had to be pretty careful about whom I gave a visa to, because most folks didn't have a reason for coming back to Iraq, particularly non-Muslims. So, there was that. There was some legitimate academic stuff. Some of the Iraqi students

still went to the U.S. to study, although not very many. The regime made its own trips for official UN visits. We gave visas for the New York staff. Sometimes, there would be an official trip to Washington from the director general level of the Foreign Ministry. So, it wasn't a heavy flow of visas, but the Iraqis were looking for foreign investment. There was American business there. So, the finance ministry would go to the World Bank/IMF meetings, or the economy ministry would go drumming up business, and go to California, and Chicago, for instance. It was typical cross-section. But, in retrospect, I'm sure there was a big demand by ethnic minorities for visas that must have been fairly elevated. I never analyzed it much. I did each interview the best I could, but we didn't keep statistics or anything. It was interesting, all our FSNs, local employees there, after so many years, you're entitled to something called an immigration visa... After you've worked for 20 plus years and had distinguished service, you can get an immigration visa to the U.S. To a person, they all planned to take advantage of that. Everybody wanted out of there. We knew that was coming. I had processed one or two of those for ex-employees, but the consular side was generally pretty quiet.

Q: How about Americans going through there getting into trouble?

USREY: We had some interesting cases. There was one horrific case of an oil field worker up in the north, an American working a contract for some project. A pick-up truck rolled over and he died. We found out about two days later when a phone call came in from northern Iraq saying, “Hey, this guy perished in an auto accident.” They had had him in the company's offices with the air conditioning turned up full blast. It was the summer time. They were trying to keep the body reasonably intact. We got the news, and then I had to contact the family, and find out what their wishes were for the disposal of the body. Whether she wanted him buried locally or have the remains sent back for burial in the U.S. It took about two days each way to get the information. We went down to the PTT and sent a night letter. It turned out the wife wanted the body sent back for burial in the U.S. Then, we had to get the money transferred to do that. They had to put a trust deposit in with the State Department to finance this. Now, a week or so, has passed, and this body

is up north. They moved it to the company headquarters in Baghdad. We finally found some little Armenian undertaker, somebody who knew something about embalming. In the Middle East, when people die, they are buried immediately. Very few people were equipped to prepare bodies for shipment. This body was finally prepared by this not very experienced undertaker, and with a crude coffin. I remember seeing the soldering joints on the thing. It was tin, or like zinc, or something. He put it in a box, and then we got Swissair to ship it, through Zurich and then onto the U.S. It was a nightmare. I had to open the thing to do a certificate, some sort of notarial certificate so it could enter into the U.S.

Q: You had to do that to make sure...

USREY: Yes, it was really a body. I had to look at the deceased about eight days after the fact. It's not something I would want to do again. We put this thing on the plane, it finally wheels up, and I thought, “My God, what a nightmare.” Well about two days later, I went over to the Alwiya Club to play tennis. I used to play doubles with this Swissair representative. I said, “Thanks again for your help.” He said, “You won't believe what happened.” It turns out that in changing planes in Zurich, the moving and shifting and torquing, the seam broke on this coffin. The fluid leaked out of the thing, all over the luggage. They had to decontaminate the luggage. They basically had to destroy the luggage. The plane was effectively ruined. I don't know if the body ever made it, or in what state. They took the body and some little Swiss guy did a proper job and put it in a real coffin. It was horrific. We had stuff like that. Also, we had a child custody case. Some Iraqi had met an American, and absconded with the kids following a divorce, and come back to Baghdad. The American mother's Congressman was all up in arms. I had to try to negotiate with the husband to abide by the California terms of the divorce decree. Actually, it was successful. He put the kids on a plane after about two months. I got lots of kudos for that one. I think he realized he had done the wrong thing, and the kids were eventually shipped back. So, it was stuff like that. There were businessmen around who needed visas. They needed passport services and so forth, and extensions.

Q: Did anybody get in jail?

USREY: Yes, we had one American. I was allowed to attend the trial. It was an interesting procedure. I think he was a dual national, Iraqi-American. I think the trial was political. I think his charges were political. I wasn't any help in ever getting him out, but we did the visits that we had to do. There wasn't a lot of tourist traffic. Babylon is not much to look at. They were very strict about limiting visas to Americans who didn't have business reasons to go there. So, we didn't get much of the average tourist trade.

Q: Did you get any feel about the relationship with Saddam Hussein?What was his name?

USREY: Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr. We all knew the history of the people in the revolutionary command council. Saddam was a brutal guy. His background was well known. I think everyone knew he would be coming up. Hassan al-Bakr died a few years later in a helicopter accident; I'm not sure Saddam had any role. I remember seeing Saddam one time at the Iranian embassy. It was Iranian National Day in Baghdad. This was before the 10-year war between the two countries. A huge Persian silk carpet was in the middle of the room, and I and other diplomats were standing there, and Saddam sort of surprised everybody by showing up. As a sign of good relations, he came to the reception briefly. There was a lot of murmuring as he walked in and shook some hands. I don't remember if he shook mine or not, I can't remember. He was in the room. That was pretty interesting. There was no question that this guy was, if not the power behind al-Bakr, a soon to be player. It was hard to overstate the degree to which this was a police state. If we wanted to leave the city for a picnic on the weekend, we had to apply 10 days in advance for a permit to leave the environs of Baghdad. There were checkpoints on all the roads. If you didn't have the paper saying, you could leave... This was for all diplomats, not just Americans. We were often held in the city and couldn't leave until we had something that proved... Finally, toward the end of my tour, I befriended a younger, second secretary type at the

Foreign Ministry; a Kurdish guy, who got me permission to go to Kurdistan. I got to drive up there. That was fun. But we had pretty strained and tense contact with the Iraqis.

Q: How about the Soviet influence there at that time?

USREY: Huge. A big embassy there, immense. It still is an important relationship, of course. It was huge. All of their military kit was Russian. It was very, very big. Of course, in those days, the border of the Soviet Union was just a hop, skip and a jump across Turkey. What's now Armenia was the U.S.S.R. Iran had a border with the Soviet Union. Then, the oil emerged. The oil people knew that Iraq had the second largest proven reserves in the world, after Saudi Arabia. It has huge reserves there, which they have squandered largely. So, there was a pretty rapidly growing commercial interest in it. Just as I was leaving, they were starting to build the kind of hotels you had seen in Kuwait, the Intercontinental, the Meridians, the big world-class. They didn't have that. The old Al Rasheed Hotel was the best they had in Baghdad.

Q: Was there the feeling that the Iraqis were not spending their money wisely? Were they trying to build up a military regime then, or what?

USREY: No, I guess you're right. I should have spoken more carefully. No, in fact, I think the view was that Iraq was smarter than most Arab regimes, at that time, plowing money into development. Clearly, there was a military. They had enough money to spend on nearly everything, and to do it with breathtaking generosity. There was immense infrastructure and improvement in irrigation, roads, energy. There were ports they were trying to fix, at Um Qasr in the South. No, they were spending in all sectors. By some standards, it was a pretty enlightened administration, in terms of putting the money all around. There was no parliament to respond to. It was pretty remarkable the way they did, I guess, address a lot of the sectors.

Q: Well, back in 1960, when Gene Rostov, or something, wrote about commies taking off. Iraq was pointed to as the place that had the greatest potential, by the small population...

USREY: Two big rivers.

Q: Two big rivers...

USREY: Good agriculture.

Q: Good agriculture, oil and high literacy. They had all thingredients together.

USREY: Absolutely.

Q: They really haven't had a decent government ever.

USREY: No. I still think of the Iraqis I met as some of the most intelligent people I've known. It's hard to generalize about a nation of people as bright, but they are like the Indians in that respect. They're an impressive people. Very, very sharp. Baghdad was the place where I formed the opinion, which I haven't relinquished, which is that your personality is formed very much by your physical environment. That is why the Italians are not like the Finns, and why Hawaiians are not like the Bolivians. It really does matter where you live. That environment, if you've ever been there... You lived in Saudi Arabia, right, or was it Egypt?

Q: Saudi Arabia.

USREY: Well, you know when it's 130 degrees in the summer for six months, and one of the coldest places I've ever been in the winter, it's freezing there. That harsh, nasty climate effects the kind of people that are produced. I really think it does.

Q: Did the events of 1968, is that it, when the king waoverthrown? I mean, 1958?

USREY: Faisal, yes.

Q: When, July 14th... I think of that particularly because that is sort of used through the Arab world as the Arab street. This was one of the few times, when there really was an Arab street, where some Americans were yanked off a bus, and were literally torn apart. Was that kind of in the backs of our minds when you were there?

USREY: Yes. The stories of brutality, and Saddam digging a bullet out of his own leg... Was it Prime Minister Nuri Said who had his genitals cut off and stuffed in his mouth, and hung from a street lamp? These are savage people. You were aware all the time that violence was possible. In fact, not too longer after I got there... I mentioned our phones were tapped, but I didn't mention that one of the women who was part of our char force at the embassy had revealed... I'm vague on the details, but she talked to Art about it. She admitted that she had been approached to put a bomb in the trash. I have to believe that almost nothing happened there without the regime wanting it to happen that way, so who knows what the real deal was there. But, we were afraid they might try to do something to us. It was a dangerous place. On the other hand, it was very safe, in terms of street crime, and all that. Yes, the nastiness and the brutality of the regime was known. What they were doing to the Kurds, the gassing, which we didn't know about at the time. Well, maybe it hadn't happened yet, possibly it was later. Unbelievable.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Shuez, the Sumis, the Kurds, thdiversities, and the animosities?

USREY: Yes, in fact, Moharram was an important holiday then, and it still is in cities like Najaf and Karbala, the big Shiites and Shrine towns... People would march and beat their chest and back. It's dramatic. I had never seen that. I would never get close enough to a Moharam procession like that to witness that, that would be foolish. But, we heard about it from other Iraqis. One of the things about diversity that I thought was really interesting was, the first Christmas we were there, it was a diplomatic event that we got invited to,

organized by the Papal Nuncio, some sort of a Christmas mass. They had all the prelates of all the various Eastern churches, resident in Baghdad. It was the most unbelievable thing. They all had these mitres and gowns. Baghdad might have been the holy see of the Chaldean Church. The Copts who are based in Alexandria were there; but also the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, the Armenian archbishop was there. It was unbelievable to look at these people. It was like you were in the ninth century or something. All these subsets of Christianity existing in close proximity. I mentioned the wedding we went to in the Armenian village. There was an Armenian ghetto right downtown. Ghetto was the right word. They were living in a very defined area. Then, you had a very closely divided society, mostly Arab, probably about 88% or so. Then, the rest were others, such as Kurds. There were Jews there too.

My driver, for example, Abbas was illiterate, but he spoke seven languages. He spoke Arabic, English, Kurdish was his mother tongue, Turkish, Farsi, Chaldean, and one other one that I can't remember. He could speak seven languages but he couldn't read any of them. I only found out once when I asked him to read something. He admitted that he couldn't read. He was ashamed of it. He was a fabulous guy. He once was tortured. He was kept for several days in jail. Art was beside himself trying to get access to see him. Of course, he had no consular rights because he was not an American. Art kept at it, and finally he was released. He had been beaten up pretty good. I guess the regime thought he was involved in Kurdish resistance or something, and was reporting to the Americans, which he wasn't. Anyway, he must have been beaten up pretty badly. He went home, washed up, got a clean shirt, and drove to the airport to pick up the diplomatic pouch that night at the airport. Few marines would do that. He wasn't even an American, but he was determined to get the American pouch. He was an astonishing person. So, you had these little stories among the minorities who were there, so diverse was the word. It was quite a place.

Q: How about with this Kurdish war? This is during the time of Henry Kissinger and the State Department, and all. We sort of turned that Kurdish rebellion on and off, without

much regard for the Kurds, particularly. Rather cynical, I think. Did you get any feel for that?

USREY: Well, the deciding event, or the main event that enabled Iraq to really crush this insurgency, and put it down, was... You remember, the Shah and the Iraqis disagreeing on the border line on the Shatt al-Arab, where it was. The Iranians claimed it was on the Iraqi shore, their national boundary right along the Iraqi side, and the Iraqis claimed that it was on the Iranian side. They agreed on a defining line, down the middle. This was seen as a big concession to Iran. What we later found out was what the Iraqis got in exchange was Iran made an agreement to close the border up north, in Kurdish areas, so that the Kurds couldn't with impunity, move back and forth, into Iran after clashes with the Iraqi forces. So, they were able to polish them off. Not so much anything the U.S. did, although we were partial to the Shah's regime at that time. I never got to Tehran. My wife drove the van over there with a French woman friend. They went to the commissary. I got to Hamadan, Isfahan, and to Shiraz on another trip; but I never actually got to Tehran. I regret that. Ron Neumann was up in... Tabriz I think, reporting from up there on the internal situation in Western Iraq. I remember seeing his cables.

Q: Who is this?

USREY: Ron Neumann, who is now our ambassador in UAE, I think.

Q: How about Basra? Did you ever get down there?

USREY: Yes, I got to Basra. In fact, there's an interesting story. I don't know if I told you at dinner or not. In 1967, we had a consulate there; and then a little house, a little villa attached to it. It was very nice living, actually. It was right on the water, down on the main street. It was a nice little area. That was closed up, sealed by the departing... I guess the Belgians might have done it. They put a wax seal on the door, and all that stuff. It was never reentered, ever, since 1967. Some U.S. firm, Brown & Root, or whoever it was, got a contract to build a sewer system in Basra. It was a big contract. There was no USAID or

anything. It was a straight commercial deal. There was really no commercial office space down there. They had no place to put their people up. They saw the U.S. compound, and expressed interest through Washington, in having a look. So, I was dispatched down to Basra, with orders to go down there and open it up and look at it, and give a tour. I remember breaking the seal, taking a little crow bar type thing, snapping the wooden bar there. The dust was about that thick on the floor (three or 4 inches), fine talcum powder. I turned on the light, and the light came on. The bulb worked, after seven years, or whatever it was. They ended up taking it. They cleaned it up. It had a little pool, and a nice villa, all of good architecture. It was a sweet deal. Without having to sell the property, we were getting some nice rent on it, and they had a place where the project manager could be. So, I got down to Basra. It's all dates down there. Iraq was then, and may still be the world's largest source of dates. All you saw was just a sea of date palms. We must have eaten dinner there, but there wasn't much to see in those days. I don't think we did much else. We stopped at Ur, the ruins. I went to the marshes to see the marsh Arabs, on the way back, but there was nothing much in Basra. We went down there just to do our thing there with the office.

Q: How about the British and others? Who was doing the oil?

USREY: BP, British Petroleum had been nationalized. It was now Basra Petroleum. They had retained some of the British expatriate workers, the experts and financial types. They were some of the people we saw socially in Baghdad. British Petroleum had been nationalized, just like ARAMCO had nationalized US interests. So, they went on to work, and made enough money to make it worth their while. They were no longer solely holding the thing, so the Brits were there. There was oil in the north, as you know too. There is oil all over the place, up around Kirkuk. Oil fields are very, very large, and all over the country. But, the biggest fields are down in the south.

Q: Were we seeing Iraq as a military menace in the area at that time?

USREY: No, I don't think so. The way I would characterize it is we saw Iraq as an ideological leader of this Baath, Arab Nationalist hard line movement that was opposed to our Middle East policy and was part of the larger Arab movement which denied recognizing Israel as existing, and chimed a continual state of war with Israel, and keeping the boycott going. All the things we didn't like about Middle East politics in those days was being fueled by the resistance of the hard line states like Iraq and Syria, and Libya, I guess, after the king left. Iraq and Syria vied for the leadership of the hard line states. Iraq was more, I think, a political force. I don't think anyone could know they were going to invade Kuwait. No one could have foreseen that brutal 10-year ghastly war with Iran. But, they fought the Iranians to a standstill. If you look at the maps, despite the human carnage, the amount of land lost is about the size of Fairfax County. It was ridiculous, this ten-year blood bath. We certainly didn't know anything about Saddam Hussein's future plans for weapons of mass destruction or even nuclear. None of that stuff was even conceivable. It wouldn't have been hard to predict that someday there would be a military force to reckon with. But our focus on Iraq was more political at the time.

Q: Were you and Art working on Baathism, trying to figure out what the Baath Party was? The difference between the Iraqi Baaths and Syrian Baaths?

USREY: It's an arcane difference probably. Art did spend some time thinking about that, reporting on it. I had other duties that kept me busy with the consular and administrative work, so I pitched in less on political issues. But, it was an interesting philosophy. “Baath” means renaissance, I think, doesn't it, in Arabic? So, it was part of an Arab nationalist, revivalist thing. We knew we had to reckon with it at some point. It continues to be between Syria and Iraq a source of some friction. Which would prevail and what would that mean for the larger U.S. regional interest? I didn't plumb the depths of that issue... I was out playing tennis, basically.

Q: What about Israel? Did that come up all the time, or not?

USREY: It did. I mentioned the Newsweek magazines where the word “Israel” was scratched out and “Zionist entity” was written in. Those were the days when if you had a businessman who came through the region, and went to Iraq, and had already been to Israel, if they saw the stamp, he wouldn't be allowed in. So, we were issuing Americans separate passports for the Israel portion, so the Iraqis would not know that they had even been to Israel. It was nothing but hardline, rejectionist Baathism. It was the most vehement propaganda you could imagine. Israel didn't exist, but if it did exist, we've been in a constant state of war since 1948 with them.

Q: I assume the papers were also attacking opposition, vis a viIsrael?

USREY: Unbelievable. To a degree that was breathtaking. I give them credit. The guys they had writing for these papers, for instance, Al Thawra, the big newspaper there, the regime mouthpiece. It was pretty crap. It was crap, but it was pretty creative crap. I learned a lot about “running dogs,” “hireling puppets,” “stooge puppets,” “illegitimate regime,” all this classic Soviet lexicon.

Q: The Soviets were there as a major presence, but did you get any feel about there being any affinity between the Iraqis and the Soviets? Was it a marriage of convenience? My question really is predicate on the idea of the Soviets don't seem to fit into other cultures very well.

USREY: No, they don't. The story I'm about to tell you is one that actually took place in Egypt. It's a joke, but I think it would have fit in Iraq. We once went to the beach, near Alexandria. This vendor was selling melons. We bought some melons and some cokes and stuff. The vendor said, “I like Americans, but I don't like Russians.” We asked why and he said, “Well, the Russians would buy one melon and split it between two people.” They didn't have enough money to buy each of them one. They didn't like their niggardly ways. Russians didn't like the Arabs either, I don't guess. I think it was a very utilitarian relationship. Clearly, Iraq had what Russia needed, which was grain, oil. Russia had what

Iraq needed, the planes, arms and tanks. It worked perfectly. They could pay cash for it and were happy to do so. It was very cold-hearted, commercial. Although, a lot of the Baath philosophy is very Marxist in its nature. They had a very Soviet style organization. They had the political officers, the secret police, and all that stuff. The heavy interior ministry was very Soviet. That is typical of a lot of third world countries anyway.

Q: Were there any young Iraqis going to the United States to study,or were they headed off to the Soviet Union?

USREY: Mostly to Eastern Europe and Russia. The regime was clear-eyed about that. They realized that the best education was probably in the U.S. I remember now since this 9/11 stuff, we had a number of pilots. There was a number of flight school students. Penn State, Texas, and in some cases, Harvard, and the top ivies, too, Berkeley. These were smart people. They were often scholarship students of the Iraqi government. Even then, an Ivy League education was still a lot of money. There was a flow. I don't think we were the main target of overseas study, but... I wish I had some numbers I could run by you. It was more than occasional.

Q: Did you get any feel for Iran and relations between the two there?

USREY: It must be a lot like the way India and Pakistan relate to each other, I would think. I'm trying to think of another relationship. It wasn't ethnic in that sense. Iran is Shia Muslim, and Iraq is mixed. Whereas, with India and Pakistan, it's Hindu versus Muslim. But, I think, both countries had tremendous histories. They had glorious historic pasts. Iran was clearly stronger, bigger. They had a bigger military, a bigger economy. It was quite a different government. They had this pro-American Shah, and there was a Baath People's Republic in Iraq. There was a certain built-in tension based on that. I think nobody would have been surprised if one day they said they were going to clash for regional influence, or something. Also, the Kurdish thing was sensitive. I mentioned that before they cut that deal on the Shatt al- Arab, the Iranians were letting the border stay open, and letting the

Kurds have their way up there. This was very deeply resented by the Iraqis. There were some tensions. Look at Iraq; they are wedged in between Syria and Iran. What a tough neighborhood, with Saudi Arabia to the south. It's easy to be paranoid if you are an Iraqi, looking around you. There had been historic invasions of the Persians into Mesopotamia, and all that. That weighs heavy in Middle East politics. Ctesiphan Arch, is the biggest unsupported arch in the world, which I think is still standing. One of the Persian emperors, Darius, or whomever it was, built the thing when they came into Mesopotamia. You felt that it was a palpable rivalry, like you had with Syria.

Q: How about religion? Did Islam, or any particular persuasion plamuch of a role, that you noticed in Iraq, or not?

USREY: I thought it did at the time. I only realized later when I went to Egypt, and then later to Morocco, that Ramadan, for example, was observed a lot less widely. This is often the stuff of fads in the Middle East. The Hijab and how closely Ramadan is adhered to is a social fad today in the Middle East. In retrospect, Iraq was quite a secular place. The symbols of Islam were not used overtly. Certainly, the Hajj is a big thing, and the Iraqis followed the Hajj, and so you could do it pretty easily. It's a border trip into Mecca. In retrospect, I think it was probably the most secular Arab country I had ever been in, in that way. They demystified some of it. The leadership didn't have to employ Islam for legitimacy. They used other stuff.

Q: At some point, I'm not sure when, but Ayatollah Khomeini was iIraq for a while.

USREY: Yes, I think he was in Karbala for a while, that was waback, and then he went to France.

Q: He wasn't a name or anything

USREY: No. Maybe to students of Islamist politics he might have been a known figure. It wasn't anything we reported on or knew about, as I recall.

Q: How did you find relations with the most important power, Washington? Was there much interest in what was going on, did you feel? Or, in the bordering states from our embassy, or were you two guys out there feeling like people weren't paying much attention to?

USREY: Our communications were so primitive that I guess you had to draw the conclusion that if Washington wanted more real time thinking from Baghdad, they would have paid for it. It was the mid-1970s, and we didn't have full commo, since we didn't have marines there to protect it. So, we had to do this one-time pad system and send night letters through the local PTT. It was very unbelievably primitive to get a message out. What we normally would do is type a message up and send it in a weekly classified courier to Kuwait. Sometimes I was the courier to Kuwait. My wife and I both made runs down there. We became non pro-couriers, got deputized to go down there and deliver a bag. Once I was filmed at Baghdad Airport carrying it. This was probably the TV broadcast: “Here's the running dog American imperialist taking secrets to the Hirelong Stooge faction in Washington,” or something like that. Everything was so slow. We got the cables, and it was a big feast day. We got the stuff from Kuwait in hard copy, reporting from Tehran, reporting from Beirut. We began seeing the regional embassy, such as from our large embassy in Beirut and from much smaller posts, such as in Cairo. We didn't even have relations in Egypt. You would get this stuff one week, 10 days late, and say, “Ah.” A lot of our news was interpreted that way. You had to assume that Washington, in terms of the Assistant Secretary of State, whoever that was at the time...

Q: Was it Atherton?

USREY: It may have been before Atherton. Who's the guy at the Council for Foreign Relations, up there now? I can't even think. I don't know who it was.

Q: We were talking about Roy Atherton, most of the time.

USREY: There was Egypt, there was Israel, there was Saudi Arabia.There was the whole range. We had embassies in places like Oman.

Q: Did you get many visitors?

USREY: Not too many. We got a few visitors. Art was thrilled one time, I remember, when a regional ambassadorial chief of mission conference, which I think took place in Riyadh, or Jeddah. Jeddah at the time was the capital. Kissinger came out. They went around the table, and Art got to speak in the forum. He gave his view. He said it was very well received by Kissinger. He thanked him for it. He found it very enlightening. It made me think that they weren't thinking much about Iraq as the Assistant Secretary and above level then. That began to change, as you know, later.

Q: Well, in 1976, you left there, wither?

USREY: I took an assignment to Buenos Aires, Argentina, which guess I had always wanted to go to.

Q: This goes back to the salt tables.

USREY: The salt maps. I was due there in December, and we left Baghdad in April. I had six months of Spanish at FSI in addition to what I had in high school. I was in pretty good shape. We arrived right before Christmas. Those were the days when they said, “Please come before Christmas.” So, we got to Buenos Aires in December 1976.

Q: You left there when?

USREY: I left Buenos Aires in December 1978, after exactly two years.

Q: What was the situation in Argentina at the time?

USREY: It was a big mess. Isabel Peron had just been overthrown. This was the second wife of Peron. She had been overthrown by this junta. They were three, a triumvirate of Air Force, Navy, and Army generals. Videla was the nominal head of it. So, there was a military government. There was hyper inflation. I remember going to the store and seeing cans of tomatoes with eight, nine stickers on them. Each day, they would go through and reprice everything. It was astonishing. The exchange rate board at the embassy, when you got accommodations exchanged for your checks, would change all the time. It was cheap to live there. We would go out, and you couldn't spend $20.00 in the best restaurants in town. We had a great time. Only until quite late in my tour did we become fully aware of the “dirty war” that had been going on almost this whole period. That they had been putting away their own people. I got involved in that. Do you know Tex Harris?

Q: I've interviewed Tex Harris.

USREY: Tex was very close to that, and did some of the best reporting on it from the political section. I was a consular officer there. The junta, after getting much bad international press, had decided to give this much talked about “derecho de opcion,” right of option, which effectively meant that if you were a political prisoner, and you didn't have outrageous charges against you, if you would give up your Argentine nationality, and agree to exile yourself permanently from the country, the right of option, you could leave, if another country would take you. I found myself going into jails interviewing people, to see if they would be eligible to come to the U.S. So, I got some great reporting and stories to end on. The present conditions, and so on. That began to cloud the whole experience. It's a huge city, 12 million people, very well off. They've squandered a lot of that now.

Q: When you got there, who was the ambassador?

USREY: Ambassador Hill, a political appointee. He was followelater by Raul Castro, the former governor of Arizona.

Q: Looking back on it, would you say that the people, from the ambassador down, until you get to the young squirts, like Tex Harris and yourself, were really trying to keep the relationship on an even keel, and didn't want to get too concerned about the dirty war? You must have known about this. We have the CIA down there, and all that. Was this a decided topic?

USREY: I remember Pat Derian had been appointed our Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, our first one. She came down to visit Argentina as part of a regional trip. She agreed to speak at a town meeting for the embassy. Some guys in the military had established a heavy relationship with the Argentine military. I guess we had had a treaty relationship with the Argentines, and certainly a very robust military-to-military relationship. At least we did then. The news that the military was engaging in practices that were inimical to our interests was not greeted with great pleasure by our military colleagues. I remember a question that was very disrespectful. Some colonel or lieutenant said to Pat Darien, “Does this mean we are not going to be selling any more helicopters or military equipment to the Argentines?” He said, “Well, we certainly aren't going to be selling thumb screws.” Quiet, quiet, hushed response after that. I don't think anyone knew the scope of it. I don't know how much the station or CIA knew or didn't know, but it certainly became known to Argentines and to the larger international community, only well into the dirty war, what was going on. This included things like the military dropping suspected subversives out of helicopters. It was very bad. So, there was economic chaos. We had a huge U.S. corporate presence there. Argentina, at the turn of the century was the fifth GNP of the world. It was more rich than the U.S. It was a big country. So, we had a big commercial relationship with Argentina. We had a typical big embassy with a huge USIS section, and a massive press operation. We had a big military relationship. We had all the typical functions of a big embassy. I think there was some reluctance by the business community and the military to believe what they were beginning to hear, about the atrocities, by the Argentine military.

Q: Weren't there, within the embassy, as this news came out... Sometimes the split that occurs at an embassy where essentially the junior officers are much more indignant over moral issues and all. Where the more senior officers see things in relationships, and they don't want to upset things. There is a balance here. It's easy to take a high moral standard if you're junior, without responsibility, but if often happened. Did you see that there?

USREY: Yes, I think there probably was some of that older-younger split. I also would say that some of the people... I don't know to what extent we are encouraged to talk about colleagues here.

Q: We can talk about colleagues.

USREY: Maybe edit it later.

Q: We are talking about the role of people within policy things, swe do talk about colleagues.

USREY: Let me just say it this way, if it works. Some of the younger embassy officers whose job it was to report on this, maybe made it a bit of a personal campaign to sort of go hard after its work, while some of the other younger officers, maybe in the economic section and elsewhere, saw this as maybe grandstanding, even hotdogging. It was not only a senior-young junior split, but there was some skepticism among other elements of the embassy that maybe this was a little odyssey of personal glorification here. I don't know how to characterize it. I remember having conversations along those lines.

Q: I think it was Tex Harris who told me that he found himself sort of cut out at a certain point, where he was talking about the Navy, which apparently was sort of the nastiest school.

USREY: Yes, it turned out that the Naval Mechanic School was thtorture chamber, basically.

Q: The torture chamber, and reporting on this. There seemed that there was a big contract that was coming out of Pennsylvania for turbines, or I don't know what have you, but for Naval purposes, and this report about how nasty the Navy was having repercussions up in Congress. The governor of Pennsylvania and the delegation was quite unhappy about this.

USREY: That could be. I don't know that story. Let me try to give a little more context. I got there in December 1976, and left two years later. It was my impression that of the two years, this thing was only really a policy focus of the embassy in a big way the last six, eight months. In fact, we weren't consumed by this. The embassy was big and it concentrated across a wide spectrum. I was friends with some Argentine bankers, and the dirty war never came up. They didn't seem concerned about it. We had cultural activities and all this stuff. There was the usual power play range. It was the usual military stuff. So, this was seen as one aspect of it. It wasn't the only thing going on. It was one aspect of a complicated, big highly textured relationship. It was a big democracy that had been upset by this military takeover. That was seen as, I guess, as a parentheses.

Q: At that time, it wasn't as apparent as it certainly is today, but were we looking at what was causing Argentina to be a failed state almost? It has all the riches in the world. Anything you want was there, practically; European population, not much of an Indian problem, wonderful agriculture.

USREY: Top wheat producers in the world. Huge ports.

Q: All this. At that time, were we asking what is wrong with thespeople?

USREY: I think we were. There's a cycle of military government, this sort of cycle of civilian to military is so corrosive, that you see now, clearly in retrospect, that this was a huge blow to their development. Also, I think there was economic mismanagement. They had very high tariff areas. They were famous for this, a protected economy, like India, in many ways. They protected the Argentines. There was an Argentine Ford and an

Argentine Peugeot. Imports were not allowed to come in. If U.S. companies wanted to set up, they had to do a wholly owned subsidiary and produce goods there, with a majority of Argentine ownership, and all that stuff. They started printing money when things got tight. It was just fiscal mismanagement. That is obviously easier to do when you have a dysfunctional legislative branch, and a Peronist and radical populous sentiment was lingering. Then, you had this alternate military-civilian government. So, it's a recipe for mismanagement. I don't think it was corruption, per se. You had a certain amount, but not on a Ceausescu or Mobutu scale. We obviously have some here. I think it was more economic mismanagement, lack of responsibility. You have to blame the press. They had eight daily papers there. You have to blame an institution that just didn't work. The checks and balances didn't work. I'm impressed with your ability to pay attention to all this lovely detail. It must be an acquired skill or something.

Q: It is. Well, I enjoy it. What about consular work? What were consuls doing there, when you were there

USREY: First of all, I was thrust into the non-immigrant visa section. We were just giving short-term visas, tourist visas, student visas, and so on. It is one of the most international cities in the world. You can give visas to people from Sweden. There were big ports, so you had seamen coming in. You gave the whole range. It was one of the few posts where you give the whole range. All these visa categories have letters of the alphabet, and here you gave the gamut. There were seamen visas, transit visas, pilot visas, student visas, and whatever. I later became head of the immigration unit, which was interesting. I hadn't done that before. Oddly enough, you had a lot of Argentines which, itself was a target of immigration from Europe, doing secondary immigration to the U.S. It was very, very interesting. I always thought that was the big difference between Argentina and the U.S. in many ways. You had many, many people in Argentina with Spanish passports, or Italian passports, or German passports, who had lived there several generations, whereas in the

U.S., there was always an urge to become an American. Argentines were always going back to the “madre pais.” Argentina was never really home. It was a sort of transit place.

Q: It's recently come up that an awful lot of Argentines are goinback.

USREY: Back to Europe, yes. Exactly. These were people who never had Argentine passports, who had resided for generations and still had these European passports. I always felt it was greatly to the discredit of Argentina. You had to feel that this was a bad blot on their part. This was supposed to have been one of the great American republics, and it was falling apart. But, the living was so good, the weather was good, the buildings and the architecture were magnificent. The food was superb. The people, like you say, you never saw so many clear eyes and white skin. It's the biggest white city I have ever been in, including Europe. When you go to Paris, you see people of all colors. This is 12 million white people, with only an occasional dark Brazilian on the street. It was an astonishing big pool of human resources, not doing particularly well.

Q: Did you run across the problem of protective services? WerAmericans getting in trouble?

USREY: Yes, we did have that. That did come up. We had people who died, and people who got arrested, and lots of tourism. I mentioned to you the ultimate consular service. At the end, when once this dirty war thing became a full blown bilateral issue... Again, remember we had an election while we were there, and Carter was elected in the middle of all that period. So, that switched. Before Carter, it was Ford. So, that changed our focus. Derian came in with the Carter administration. It wasn't a U.S. priority, it was an embassy priority, except for a few people, doing their own thing. So, I had this consular experience, going into prisons and talking with people who had been brutalized, and who had been given the chance to exile themselves if they wanted to. It was really interesting, and very sad.

I talked with one of the women, who was trying to go to California. She said she had been in this prison a couple years, and had overheard a conversation by guards. She heard some guards talking who said, “We have the wrong Isabel Martinez,” or whatever her name was. They had been looking for a particular person, and they broke her door down one night and took the wrong one. But having made that mistake with no due process, they couldn't admit it, and return her. They were stuck with that. You couldn't say, “Oops, got the wrong one, here she is.” So, these people became “desaparecido” (they disappeared), they came off the rolls. It was a really nasty mess. Then, it unraveled very quickly.

Q: This is your first tasting of a big embassy...

USREY: A huge embassy.

Q: In Latin America. Did you get a feel for the Latin America area and the cadre of the Foreign Service people dealing there. Did you get a sampling of that?

USREY: Good question. I did. Having gone in through NEA, they still had pride in bureau in those days, where there was the “mother bureau,” NEA, and you are always seen as being able to attract the top people. There was that feeling. ARA, now WHA, was seen as sort of a backwater. I think I noticed in the type of people you saw that you wouldn't have seen in another big embassy, in a place like Cairo, or something. I did make that distinction, which is what made me want to go back to Egypt after Argentina. I was glad to get back to the Middle East. I didn't really like that experience. Physically, personally, it was very pleasant. But, in terms of policy and the way they organized it didn't attract me much.

Q: This is probably a good place to stop. We will put at the end where we are. We have come to 1978, and wither? You left Argentina, and where did you go?

USREY: A direct transfer to Alexandria, Egypt. The Camp David Accords had just concluded, so I'm about to arrive in Alexandria, and go to my first State Dinner at the Ras el Tin Palace in Alexandria, where Jimmy Carter is being received by Anwar Sadat. I got to meet Anwar Sadat and Jimmy Carter, and Jihan Sadat, and Rosslyn Carter.

Q: All the people who became your intimate friends.

USREY: Yes, all the people I still talk to. I actually met thCarters again in Marrakech a while back. So, that's where I went.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up there then.

USREY: Great.

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Q: Today is the 15th of April, ides of April, taxes are due, 2002. Gary, you are in Alexandria, Egypt. Again, I may have asked before, but was this preordained, or did you ask for it, or did it happen, or what?

USREY: It must have been preordained, because I thought I was going to Bucharest, Romania. I had been paneled and was about to go into language training, and all that stuff, and was talking with Tom Carolan, my career assignments officer, I think he was at the time. I told him my first choice had really been Alexandria, Egypt, that I wanted to get back to a small post in the Middle East, after Baghdad, and told him I didn't really like the big embassy life at that stage of my career. This was on a Friday. Carolan said, “Oh, you want to go to Alexandria, I can arrange that; I'll call you on Monday.” I was still in Argentina. Apparently, he broke the assignment of somebody. I never knew who it was, and I wasn't an accomplice in it, it just sort of happened. I was headed back to a small post in the Middle East, Alexandria, which is no longer open. That is where I met Mac McClelland. They were there at the time. I got there in about January 1979.

Q: You were there until when?

USREY: January 1982, just a few months after Sadat had been assassinated. I always tell people that the best window an American could have possibly been in Egypt was after the Camp David Accords, and the three years before Sadat's death, so for those three years, U.S.-Egyptian relations were astonishing.

Q: Well, let's talk about the post first. At that time, 1979 t1982, what was the role of Alexandria?

USREY: As you know, we still had a lot of constituent posts that were beginning the process of closing, which had started to commence, but Congress hadn't focused much yet on the numbers game, as they would do later, when they got on the post-closing game, putting notches in their belt. There had always been a post up there, partly because of the fact that Cairo is fundamentally an Oriental city and Alexandria is Mediterranean city, it's a different culture. Another reason, at the time, apart from the fact that we already had property up there that we owned, USIS had a big library on fabulous property, the port of Alexandria was the port through which we were shipping a billion plus dollars a year of commodities on American carriers. You needed the administrative... There was a feeling in Cairo, I think, Herman Eilts and others after him, had wanted the perspective from Alexandria; where there was a big university, which from time to time, had sparked unrest, ahead of Cairo, and for different reasons than Cairo. So, it was sort of the post of the provinces. It wasn't fundamentally important, I don't think, but it was low cost. Security wasn't overbearing at the time.

Q: What was your job when you got there?

USREY: I was the deputy principal officer, but of course, there were only three or four American officers there anyway. But, I was the consular officer and the commercial officer. It was a division of labor that Mac agreed to. He wanted to do the political and

administrative work. He wanted to take care of ship visits and run the place, he liked that, and was good at it. So, we had a very, very good attache, a Palestinian, a guy named Victor Masoud, who had been with the U.S. commercial service for 30 years. I basically did what he told me to do, and went on appointments to meet American businessmen, and helped coordinate with the commercial service in Cairo and stuff, but basically it was a part-time thing doing that. I did security too. We had a marine detachment there because there was another installation there that required a marine detachment. There was always something happening at the marine house, misbehavior; and I had to answer to the local security police when they acted up. It was one of those this, that, and the other thing jobs. It was good for a junior officer. I wasn't yet a mid-grade officer.

Q: In the first place, the consular general, the whole time you were there, was Walter McClellan?

USREY: No, Mac left about a year and a half or so... I came off cycle, I came in the winter, so Mac would have left in the summer of 1980. Jim Bahti, who I think came directly from Dhaharan, where he had been consul general, but I'm not sure about that. You must have known him at some point.

Q: Yes, I've interviewed both McClellan and Bobby. Bobby, ocourse, has passed away.

USREY: Yes, it's a shame about that. So, it was about half and halof each.

Q: How about contacts within Alexandria. One thinks of it, as you say, as being a Mediterranean port; lots of merchants really looking in a different direction than, in say, Cairo.

USREY: Yes, there were certain things thrust upon us that were not optional, such as fleet visits. We got a lot. For some reason, the Sixth Fleet ship guys liked to make a stop in Alexandria, so the sailors could go to the pyramids, or whatever. A big chunk of our representative budget went to supporting that, and maybe we could have done it

differently... Mac liked to host these very large receptions with several hundred uniformed navy officers in the garden with the flame trees in bloom. It was all very pretty, but it cost a lot of money. A lot of the Egyptians came. It was a small community. Our friends were people like the Anis family, the Coptic Christian jewelry dynasty that had been there for generations, whom we still know. He's an architect in Boston now. Some other friends were the Nagaars, a distinguished Egyptian family that owned a clothing store chain, and owned property up there. It was pretty interesting. There was a little Francophone community that you didn't see in Cairo anymore. You even had the little Journal d'Egypte, the little paper that talked about the dinner parties the past week, not too important. We cultivated that group. If there was something going on, we would report on it. The university and the governor of Alexandria up there, had a big job with the university being a little restive. The Camp David Accord process started to meet up there. After Camp David, the Egyptians and the Israelis, when they were negotiating the movement of the border from Al Arish, all the way back up to Gaza, the meetings for that were held in different locations in Alexandria. At the Palestine Hotel, for example. The Israeli side joked that it should be renamed the Stein Hotel. So, we had to support that stuff. So, we supported visitors, Sixth Fleet ships, wrote the occasional think piece, but not much more. I went to Assiut. No, not Assiut. Where is the most distant of the seven oases?

Q: Not sure, it would be on the map.

USREY: Next to the Libyan border. I went up there and did a reporon that, the Embassy in Cairo thought was sort of fun.

Q: Near Al Amayn, in that area.

USREY: Well, it's south. South of Mersa Matruh, about 400 miles ithe desert there.

Q: There's a big depression there, too.

USREY: Yes, there's the Qattara depression, and then there is thoracle of...

Q: Alexander...

USREY: There's a rumor that his remains are there. I forgot the name of it. Oh, it's Siwa. The last person who signed the guest book there was about five years before. It was a piece of the consular district we didn't see much. But, we weren't terribly politically relevant, I wouldn't say, unless something came up. Mostly, it was a support post.

Q: Was there any reflection, while you were there, of Israelicoming as tourists, to Alexandria?

USREY: The liaison office opened. There were liaison offices at first, not embassies. That came later. I don't have a clear memory of Israeli tourists up there, but there had been a Jewish community in Alexandria, of course. There were probably some old synagogues. There must have been some, but it's not a big piece of my memory.

Q: How about with the university and the intellectual community?Was there much contact with them?

USREY: Yes. Through the old International Visitor program, and the USIS library was a big deal. The USIS library was a very big deal. It was heavily visited and well endowed. They had a couple of activist directors. In fact, it was the day, much later in the tour, when I received a call from Henry Precht in Cairo. It was October 6th, a holiday, and I was about to go play golf. I went into the office to clear traffic and stuff, and was headed for the golf course. Precht called and said, “There's been an attempt on Sadat's life,” and asked me to trigger the phone tree, the warden system. He said, “I want you to convey the phone line, three points, to all your wardens. It turned out that they were all completely wrong. One was, there's been an attempt, and Sadat has been injured, but he is expected to survive; he's okay, he's injured, but not gravely injured. He was clearly killed immediately, we later found out. The second point we heard was it appeared to be an isolated group of assassins, and unrelated to any larger movements. That turned out

to be untrue, because later in central Egypt, there were subsequent attacks that showed the effort was very coordinated against the whole regime. The third thing he said was “Tell everybody there should be no danger to Americans here.” Of course, Americans fell under particular suspicion at the time. Anyway, I dutifully conveyed all the things, closed the school, and closed the library, which was full of people. The library was a big deal. We had IV programs, and we had speakers, and we had an active...

Q: IV being what?

USREY: International Visitor program, where you get 10 or 12 of those a year. They are coveted because they are worth a lot of money. Egyptians selected a translator, and a guided, programmatic tour around the U.S. It was a big symbol of pride to get on one of those. So, we penetrated the university a lot for that. The university was an important bellwether. For example, there were serious riots there when the Egyptian government raised the controlled price of bread. Sadat ended up having to roll the price back, because popular backlash was so big.

Q: Some places, basically universities can be off limits for Americans, just because of the normal student unrest, and the leftward leaning, and all that. How about that?

USREY: I mean, no it wasn't quite that bad, although one, even then, was aware of the need to exercise prudence going on campus. You saw the girls with jellabas, as they called them, in Egypt. No, hegab, I guess, is what they called them. So, there was an Islamist presence, and that was the center of some Islamist activity there. But, the relations with the rector and the governor were very, very good. They were very pro-western. Again, it was the period, due to Camp David, and all that. Sadat embracing Carter. So, if anybody was welcome, it was the Americans, but we would need to avoid any gatherings on campus and be discreet and prudent. So, we steered clear, not knowing what might happen.

Q: What about the visits? Sailors all over the place. Was the fleet more or less able to take care of its people? I mean, the guys getting drunk all over the place, and that sort of thing?

USREY: Well, there was an odd incident. I recall one night coming back from a dinner party or something, and I saw a bunch of not officers, but sailors in one of those horse drawn carriages. I forget what they called them there. They were along the Corniche, and they were jumping up and down, shaking the thing, and almost overturning the carriage, terrifying the driver. I thought, “Gee, that is going to be trouble.” But, the Navy shore patrol was pretty active, and proactive. You could go get a bottle of beer, or a glass of scotch in Alexandria in those days. It wasn't like Saudi Arabia.

Q: Were we monitoring, at that time, the Islamist side of things, fundamentalism? Was there the feeling that this is a growing and dangerous forest?

USREY: That's a good question. We were monitoring it, almost as a curious phenomenon, that was manifested first, in beards and head scarves, men and women. They were sort of confounding the Egyptian administration. I don't think anyone thought that this will be a rise all across. Again, this is more than 20 years ago. I don't think we saw it as a unifying force that crossed the region that would eventually lead to something like what we saw last September. But, we knew we certainly had to watch out for the hardcore, violent groups who had been around for years in Cairo. They were known.

Q: A Muslim brotherhood.

USREY: Yes. You asked something else about visits.

Q: What about how the police took care of the sailors? Did you geinvolved in getting sailors out of trouble, and that sort of thing?

USREY: No. If there was a big visit, and they were big. We had some nuclear carriers come in there. The U.S.S. Kennedy, for example. These were massive ships, and

you would have thousands of Americans disembark. So, Mac got in touch with the Egyptian sea scouts, and of course, they had the Navy shore patrol MPs, and the security apparatus all working. My role in security was between ship visits. I had excellent relations with a contact from the Egyptian police, a guy named Meged, who was extremely helpful. I would go over once a week and have coffee with him. In fact, I'm fairly proud of this. I began to detect a pattern of visa fraud, of documents being submitted that had been done by the same people. There was clearly a ring up there. A very large push began on visas to get out of Egypt, with the grave economic conditions. I took some of this stuff to Meged and showed it to him. He, probably in violation of Egyptian law, called some of these kids in. Of course, they are scared to death of the police. They came right in. He said, “We're on to you.” My visa problems would temporarily dry up. We would go for a spell, and this trend would develop again, and I would refer them to Meged. I had almost total cooperation of the Egyptian police. In that sense, we had excellent cooperation with security. It was obviously related to vastly improved relations with Egypt, and this really good feeling about the first bit of the old peace process. Egypt was getting Gaza back. It was exciting in those days.

I was able to drive into Israel. After Dan Kurtzer in Cairo, who was a junior officer at the time, I think I was one of the first people to drive my car from Ismaelia, across the Sinai, and into Israel overland. Big deal. Egyptian plates on the car, and into Jerusalem. It was wild.

Q: Did you get any feel about how the Egyptians felt about the process? Were they just glad to get out of it? Out of a confrontation, and all that, do you think?

USREY: Now, don't forget that the Egyptians still considered the Yom Kippur war a victory. They even have a “victory museum.” The fact that Hosni Mubarak, who was head of the Air Force, had dealt Israel a surprise, stunning blow, was paramount in the Egyptian mindset, despite the fact that Israel had made massive gains at the end of the war. But, the Egyptians, for public consumption, and maybe even they believe it now, won that

conflict. They did win some respect from the Israelis. There was a feeling of more of equality, and with Sadat they felt strong enough to permit Israel to open a liaison office in Cairo. There was some excitement about the land being exchanged here, which is unusual, giving land back. Then, we had the MFO in the Sinai, and the multinational force. All that stuff was pretty interesting and all new. I think most of the Egyptians meant it. I think they were genuine about this. They decided they would put war behind them, and give peace to Israel on an equal basis, if possible. Among the elites of Alexandria, some pretty cynical, rich, and old, who had seen it during the Nasser years, there was some skepticism, but I think the majority of Egyptians found it exciting. To have the American ally right there, and all the money, that was extremely exciting.

Q: What about the Israeli liaison offices in Alexandria? Did we gout of our way to accommodate them, make them feel at home?

USREY: There wasn't one in Alexandria. The only one was in Cairo. When I was down there, I made a point to drive up and have a look at it. It was heavily guarded. The head of that office was pretty circumscribed as to his activities, and had to be very careful. The Egyptian press made life a little tricky for that person, even then. They probably did come to Alexandria, again. I don't have a clear memory of Israeli tourists in Alexandria, but they must've come. We didn't really directly get involved in that. Some Egyptians were not afraid to go to Israel. Others were worried they would get it in their record, and then when things turned sour, it would be held against them, because they had been to Israel. Some were keeping their powder dry by not making a trip, but a few did. They were sort of interesting figures in the social circuit. I've been to Israel, and some of the old bugaboos were being broken, so it was neat. But, in terms of the liaison office, we weren't involved.

Q: What about tourism? Was Alexandria where the tourist traffiwent, or did the Israelis go straight to Cairo?

USREY: Well, Israelis would go right to Cairo, and even faster to Luxor, Egypt's ancient symbol and the magnificent sights of the Valley of the Kings and all that. But, for discerning travelers and many Europeans, Alexandria used to be a huge Greek city. So, Greeks would visit by ship. They had ferries coming in. Then, you'd see Italians coming in. There were the Roman catacombs which were extremely interesting. There were some Roman sights, even some old vineyards. You could take a trip to the winery, where they say that the wine stock was the stuff the Romans had planteThey would bottle it, and we drank their wine. It was mediocre, but it was something to drink. There was all that stuff around Damietta, and some history buffs would go to Abu Kir, where Napoleon was defeated by Nelson, I think.

Q: Yes, Nelson.

USREY: In 1798?

Q: Yes. His fleet was sunk, and he was left.

USREY: It used to be, I'm told before the Soviets built the high dam, that the sediment, the nutrients that floated into the Nile Delta, produced prawns a foot long, and they would grill these things. You would get a bottle of wine, and for two bucks you could eat yourself silly on the best seafood in the area. After they built that dam, it got more expensive because the catch went down. We would still go down to Abu Kir, to see the Rosetta Stone site. We have a replica of the stone, the original of which is in Berlin, I think. We would make a day of it. The Delta was always fun. The most interesting part of that country is that Delta. It's as densely populated as the Ganges. It's one of the most densely populated places. It's almost like India or Bangladesh, right there. Of course, if you see it from space or in the air, there is nothing beyond the river. Yes, there was tourism, but the big ticket, serious stuff tourists went to Giza, and then headed South.

Q: Was there anything to the El Alamein and the British-Germabattles?

USREY: On the anniversary of the defeat of Rommel, by Montgomery, there would be a big thing out there, and you would get a lot of veterans, the Brits. People would wear their uniforms, and there would be a big commemoration. That was mostly the veterans and their families, but some tourism. Just west of El Alamein, two, three miles, was one of the best little spots in Egypt. It was called the Sidi Abdel Rahman, and it had a hotel/ motel there, with cabanas on the beach. I got into snorkeling and scuba diving when I was out there, with some Egyptian friends. We would shoot lobsters, and shoot these sea bass, and then cook them in the kitchen of the hotel. It was so beautiful. We had some great holidays out there. You would see some Europeans, Italians, and some curious Brits looking at some war sights, but beyond that, it got pretty thin, when you got to Mersa Matruhi, which was the last stop before Libya.

One thing we did have, and I forgot to mention, on the political side, King Idris of Libya was in exile in Alexandria. He had been overthrown by Qadhafi. There was a cordon of people around Idris, who continually plotted the overthrow of the Qadhafi regime, and the return of the rightful king to his throne. From time to time, they would visit us, and sometimes even call on me, instead of the Consul General. They would ask for U.S. support in something like that, if something were to go down. I would always say that I would report their views, and we would all chuckle later. I'm sure the CIA took a look at it. Every so often, there would be a group of these guys around Idris, who would say, “Do you want us to take care of Qadhafi, and would you support us?” They wanted money. We never did anything with it, and obviously he is still there. That was an interesting thing. You also had the Holy See of the Coptic Church, whose pope was in Alexandria, so we made courtesy calls on him from time to time to discuss Christian- Muslim relations.

Q: I'm told the Egyptians are really open, very friendly people.How did you find them?

USREY: Fabulous. When I think of the three Arab countries in which I served, Iraq, Egypt, and Morocco, I'm struck by how different all these people are. In Egypt, they say it's the river, that the Nile has been their lifeline of commerce and culture, with the

Africans coming north, and others coming south. After millennia of foreign penetration, the Egyptians are just, by definition, open because of the way they live, in that valley; there was simply no alternative. The Iraqis were harsh, but they were somewhat social. I found the Moroccans to be very reserved, almost like the Basques, the Moroccans. They were friendly when you got to know them, but quite difficult to cultivate. The Egyptians were all over you, like the Italians. They are Mediterraneans. It was really fun to be there. They opened their houses to us, and we were very busy, socially. It was a lot of fun.

Q: You mentioned before that you had an intimate dinner with Jimmy and Rossalyn Carter, and Anwar Sadat, and Arafat. This was a small, littler dinner party?

USREY: I guess the origins of that were at Camp David, when Carter talked Begin into returning to the negotiations. He was about to leave. You know the story that Bill Quandt tells is that Begin, discouraged with the lack of progress with Sadat, called for his helicopter to leave. Carter, who was desperate, pulled out his wallet and showed his daughter Amy's picture to Begin, and said, “What are we going to do for this generation?”. They went back in, and concluded the agreement. Then, Sadat must have asked Carter to visit Egypt. He obviously agreed, because he went. Carter flew into Cairo, and had meetings there, and then Sadat arranged for the two of them to travel by private train to Alexandria, the old summer capital, where King Farouk spent the summers. Sadat gave a state dinner at the Ras el Tin Palace, the old royal palace, which is beautiful. I was amazed that we got included on the guest list. There were about 400 people, and we were the lowest ranking people on the list. We were at a remote table, hundreds of yards from anybody. There was a receiving line, and I got to meet all these people, and two presidents. I think, also, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Q: It would have been Brzezinski.

USREY: I don't recall Kissinger. That's funny. Wait a minute.

Q: Well, Kissinger was serving then.

USREY: Who was Carter's Secretary? I guess it was Vance.

Q: It would be Vance at that point, probably.

USREY: I don't recall Vance being in the line. I remember Brzezinski. But, the highlight of that trip was, the two to three hour trip up through the Delta, which is, as I say, one of the most densely populated places in the world. The crowds of Egyptians formed at each village along the way, jogging along with the slow-moving train, yelling, “Sadat, Sadat, Carter,” for 150 miles. Carter was moved by this. He remarked at the dinner, “I would hate to run against this guy in the United States. Sadat would be a formidable political opponent.” Things were really pretty special at the time. That was remarkable. I recall my wife being worried that she didn't have a formal dress with sleeves to wear, since we'd only arrived a few days before and our air freight had not yet arrived with all our clothes. But things worked out fine, as I recall.

Q: I take it that there wasn't a security problem, as far as thpolice following you around?

USREY: No. I would ride in with Mac in the morning. We only had one official car, and he would come by and pick me up. If you've ever been to Alexandria, it's an odd geography. It's like a sandbar off the coast. Literally, it's like a strand, like the Outer Banks. The ancient city is built on this thing. It's not very wide, and you can't really vary your route, but he tried. I think we had a guard who sat in a car, and then followed. But, to my knowledge, there was never an incident, except one of our Marines who shot up some woman's house with a BB gun. I had to go to Brigadier Meged on that one. Things were pretty safe. We had plenty of security. Whatever we wanted, they would get. I'm sure the governor of Alexandria was afraid to get a report that he had not been forthcoming to the American consulate general, and then it would get back to the Interior Minister. It was like they couldn't do enough.

Q: You got there in 1979, which is a rather critical year, in that our embassy was taken over in Iran. Our embassy in Islamabad was burned.

USREY: In Tripoli, do you remember they almost killed some people? They had to escape down a staircase? They were pouring oil on the stairs, or something? It was very nasty.

Q: Yes. So, how did that play where you were?

USREY: Well, I think the Egyptians were aware of the gravity of all that. They put a security clamp on. There were no remarkable incidents in Egypt that I recall. But, it was very bad. I guess it was sparked by rumors on Saudi radio that during the Hajj, the Americans said there was an explosion.

Q: That the Americans had instigated that.

USREY: There is nothing worse that you can say. Bad news. I had my BBC and the VOA. I had gone down to Hurghada on the Red Sea for a long weekend with the family. I took my radio and heard that our embassy in Iran had had hostages takes. It didn't resonate locally, really. I don't have any memory. I'm sure security was increased, but no.

Q: There wasn't any talk of evacuating Americans, or dependents, oanything like that? Because in some places, they did.

USREY: Of course they did, in Islamabad. They closed in Tripoli.

Q: I think in the Gulf states, dependents had to get out, much ttheir annoyance.

USREY: I don't recall any. There might have been, between the RSO and the DCM in Cairo, when they talked to the department, some “What do you think?” There was probably some cable traffic between Cairo and Washington that we did not see. I don't recall that departure being a debated issue. Again, remember the American security assistance

was coming in big time. The Egyptians wanted nothing to endanger that, and would do anything to clamp extremism down. It seemed like a foreign event from there.

Q: What about the sway of our embassy in Cairo? Did you feel yowere on your own?

USREY: I felt we were pretty much on our own. Mac would make it a point to go down once a month. He asked me to take turns as well, so each of us would go down every other month to Cairo. We would attend a staff meeting, and say something when our turn came, about Alexandria. We would make the rounds and go through. If we had a complaint with the GSO or personnel, or whoever it was, we would just see everybody. I would routinely call on the ambassador. We would make a courtesy call, for five minutes, or whatever. They didn't ask a great deal of us, and I don't recall any instructions, at my level, that Cairo issued, that we disagreed violently with. We would get regular visits from that very big embassy. I remember being struck how big the damn thing was. It was immense. The biggest in the world, if you counted AID contractors, depending upon how you defined it. There were hundreds of FSNs, and several property warehouses. You got down there, and you were glad to get back on the train that night to Alexandria, and return to your little quiet post. I liked Alexandria. I had a nice house, and Cairo pretty much left us alone, although we did stay in touch. We had a leased telephone line with the Embassy that enabled us to avoid long distance service. We used that pretty much. I stayed in touch with the consular section pretty frequently, because there were lots of back and forth checks and collaboration regarding visa issues. I didn't feel that we were chafing under a centrist administration in Cairo. The type of people who were there were, at first, Hermann Eilts, and then Roy Atherton...

Q: So, Roy Atherton was the...

USREY: I don't recall either ambassador being terribly interested in Alexandria, or management in general. Atherton was known for his lack of interest in that issue.

Q: Yes.

USREY: He didn't care much for management, even later when he was Director General of the Foreign Service. Otherwise, he was an excellent ambassador. He and his wife were interested in the American school in Alexandria. He faithfully would attend the meetings. Mac was also very involved, and then when he left, I took over as the school board rep, since we gave the school a USG grant. The school played a big role in post morale.

Q: Was there any university or school there with American ties, buEgyptian run or not?

USREY: At the university level? Q: Yes. Or, at the high school level.

USREY: We had the Alexandria American school. What was it called? The Schutz American school, which started with some missionaries. It had mostly Egyptian students. It's original history was as a boarding school. So, they still had a few kids whose parents were in places like Yemen, or something, and they board them there, in the region. We gave a fair amount of money, and even financed some capital projects, and construction stuff. If that's what you mean, we had a pretty close collaboration that way. There were a lot of American teachers there. That is still operating. We still get their newsletter. With respect to Alexandria University, it was a huge public institution, with 100,000 students or so. WE were quite active in our relationship with the University, such as with grants and visiting U.S. professors.

Q: How about the Suez Canal? I guess Port Said was shut by thitime, wasn't it?

USREY: Well, it was open when I got there. In fact, Haywood Rankin was the consul and did a wonderful last piece on the history of the canal and the city of Port Said, when the Consulate closed. But Port Said was in Cairo's consular district. I never actually went to Port Said. I crossed the Canal once at Ismailia, but I never saw Port Said.

Q: Did you get any feel for Libya, and Libya messing around witQadhafi there, in Alexandria?

USREY: Well, we had some people up in Alexandria who paid attention to that, but it was not part of my work load. Qadhafi was very much an irritant for our policy, anI the U.S. wanted him out of there. The Egyptians were afraid of trouble coming across the border. It was a pretty heavily policed border, in terms of the security. If you meant that we felt a permanent, ongoing threat, it was more of how we view Castro now. Qadhafi was sort of an embarrassment, or an irritation, but not an obsession.

Q: There weren't alerts about Libyan tanks on the border, messing around?

USREY: I think once, at least, there was the rumor that they moved some Egyptian forces toward the border in response to a perceived threat of Libyan meddling. I seem to recall a helicopter crash near the Libyan border that killed a number of Egyptian senior officers. There was some press speculation about Libyan involvement, but I don't recall the details.

Q: Were you doing political reporting there?

USREY: Only occasionally. Mac and Jim would do most of that. Sometimes they would ask me to add some things. If I had a piece, I would send it up, and Jim or Mac would add something. We didn't send a lot. It was only the three of us, and we kept fairly busy administering to ourselves. But I was asked to make a quarterly report on the mood on American business or something, since I did the commercial work, or the mood on the campus. We would put together periodic pieces, but the demand for reporting was not great.

Q: With the money going in, and the Camp David thing, was thiconsidered an area of opportunity for American business?

USREY: It was. We viewed Egypt, and Alexandria, as a potential hub for regional business, but in retrospect that didn't happen. The Middle East is not an integrated regional economy. They all trade with Europeans or the Americans. They don't trade among themselves much at all, despite all the rhetoric about Arab solidarity and the Arab nation, and all this crap, they won't trade with each other. They pretty much don't like each other, as you know. One of the big battery companies, it might have been Everready, manufactured batteries in Alexandria for export in the region, and there was oil, we had a Phillips rep there. There was an old Ford plant that used to make bus parts or something. Then, Ford was a boycotted company, after the '68 war. With the Camp David agreement, there was hope that the Ford plant was going to start turning out cars, to be distributed inside Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East, and that never happened. We kept in touch with the plant manager, and we couldn't get a clear answer on the economics of it. Given the foreign investment there, Alexandria with its port had some attributes of being a regional business hub. It never really took off though.

Q: What about the infrastructure of Alexandria? Later on, I think much of our aid has gone into sewage and communication, basically trying to make Cairo and Alexandria viable, modern cities. Was this happening?

USREY: It was. A Boston-based company, the name of which escapes me now, had an AID contract for building a proper sewage system. Apparently, the untreated sewage at that beach... You know, millions of Egyptians go up there in the summer from Cairo. They would take turns in apartments. One family would walk all night, while the other family slept. The beachfront was packed with these apartment houses. So, there was a huge tourist trade to escape the Cairo heat. So, people would swarm to the beaches. But the existing system dumped untreated sewage just a few hundred yards offshore. The American plan was to partially treat the sewage and dump it in an outfall a mile or so offshore where currents would disperse it. U.S. firms were also working on water treatment. In fact, we got very worried about the health of the people at post. We found out

that the water in the Mahmudiya Canal, which was one of the irrigation canals, from which they took water for the city supply, had heavy metals, or mercury in there, or cadmium. It was bad stuff. So, we started drinking bottled water. That was very much a concern of the post.

In a funny aside, there were these dilapidated Egyptian buses in Alexandria that would lean to one side, with dozens of kids hanging off the back. I thought it was such a shame. Through the Blue Bird Company, we financed the sale or the grant of a bunch of a buses to the Alexandria Transport Authority. Within a few weeks, they looked like the old ones. They were just beating the shit out of them. All the seats were torn out of them, and guys still were hanging off the back. The Egyptians joked about poor American workmanship. Of course, they had 200 people on the bus, designed for 75, or something. There was a lot of that. The airport, which had been closed, I guess, for military reasons after the '68 war was reopened after the '73 war. It was a long drive to get to Cairo, about three hours. The train was about three hours. Do you remember the Austrian race car driver, Nicky Lauda?

Q: Yes.

USREY: He started an airline using Fokker commuter aircraft, I think a turbo prop. So, you could suddenly fly to Cairo. It took about 20 minutes to get there. It was great. So, you could come down and come back very easily, in one day. More importantly, when we had the presidential visit, we could use that airport to support flights. Not Air Force One, but support stuff. But I don't think Egypt ever realized its regional trade potential.

Q: Well, one thinks about Italy and Greece. Were these naturatrading colleagues?

USREY: In fact, the Greek presence was important. The Italians were also quietly moving into Egypt. This was about the time that Italy supplanted the U.K. as number five economy in the world. When you would go to the market, you had this Italian baby food, and Italian clothes, and Italian toys, and Italian magazines. The Italians suddenly seemed to be all over the place. With their low transport costs, Italian firms had an advantage. The Greek

presence was more cultural. They had a large consulate general, and the Consul General complained all the time about how bad Egypt was. There were some Greek tourists, and I guess some Greek trade. In what, I don't know. Maybe it was in olive oil, or something.

Q: I was in Greece as Consul General from 1970 to 1974.

USREY: In Thessaloniki?

Q: In Athens. One of the big exports from Alexandria were Greek women who were born in Alexandria, and were belly dancers. I was told the best belly dancers were Greek Alexandrians.

USREY: Belly dance is, I guess, originally Turkish. They don't really do it in the Gulf, and they don't do it in the Maghreb, but in Egypt, it's an art form. That's right, they had a lot of Greek names. I remember one party that was given by someone named Stephanopolous, who was a retired Greek tycoon. He was Egyptian, but Greek originally. Any big party you went to in Alexandria, there were always some Greeks, usually speaking French. It was a disadvantage for me because I didn't speak French at the time. I felt a little awkward. At some point, diplomats would come erroneously trained in French. One of the Soviet bloc guys was Romanian, I think. He only spoke French. He was often stuck there, talking with only a small group of people. Yes, the Italians were all over the place. I think they were probably doing oil exploration in the Red Sea when they found out there was oil there. The Greeks too.

Q: How about the Soviets? What were they up to there?

USREY: That was the time when we boycotted the Moscow Olympics, and the Soviet departure from Afghanistan, so we really had very limited contact with them. Our policy did shift with Carter's change in the China policy, and we were allowed to have an exception in our contact policy with Chinese officials. I had frequent contact with the Chinese Consul, and I recall a few 10 course dinners at the Chinese consulate, which we were obliged to

report afterwards. But the improvement in U.S.-Egyptian relations really began to see the waning of Soviet-Egyptian relations in all areas. Q: Well, then, is there anything else you should cover there?

USREY: I don't think I mentioned when Sadat was shot, all the confusion. During our last three months in Egypt, Mubarak was president. There was a lot of soul-searching about Egyptian security and the intern

Q: Well, then, in 1982, you left, wither?

USREY: I came on back to Washington. Without my asking to be put into it, I had been assigned into something called a midlevel course. You probably have heard of that.

Q: Yes.

USREY: I was in the second iteration of it. There were only about five, I think. Then, they discontinued it. It was a pretty good course that should have been about half the length. It was five months, as I recall. That was en route to an assignment in the operations center. I was a senior watch officer in the Op Center. From the summer of 1982... That would have meant I would have come back to Washington in January 1982, and was in the mid-level course until the summer of '82. From the summer of 1982 until December 1983, I was in the operations center, doing shift work. It was a pretty exciting place to work with the world developments at the time. There was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the U.S. marine barracks bombing. Leonid Brezhnev died on my watch. That was also the time of the Grenada war. I think I told you a story about that.

Q: Tell it again.

USREY: Anyway, I had the midnight to eight shift. We still were using paper copies of telegrams at the time. We would send them down to the communications center in pneumatic tubes. My job was to approve them to be transmitted. One midnight I arrived,

and there were something like 35 flash NODIS cables ready to be transmitted, announcing our invasion of Granada. The story I heard later from a colleague about what happened in Morocco. Joseph Verner Reed had received the Grenada telegram, and asked urgently to see the Foreign Minister at six in the morning. Reed announced “Monsieur le Ministre, c'est la guerre!” The minister gasped and asked “Vous et les Sovietiques?” He must have thought it was thermonuclear war. Reed said, “Non, Granade.” The minister said, “Avec l'Espagne?” “Non, Granade.” The Moroccan obviously didn't know what Reed was talking about. He didn't know what Granada was. So, I did that physically exhausting job for 18 months. It was punishing because you would go on and start the shift cycle with two days, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Very nice. You would go in from 8:00 to 4:00, and you were done. You go home, and there was no homework. No working late. Then, you would follow that with two days with 4:00 to midnight, which was even nicer because you could sleep late, maybe cut the grass, and run a few errands. Then, go in at 4:00 in the afternoon, and you were still home by 12:30, which was fine. Then, you took a day off, and you report at midnight for the 12-8 shift. Then, you are a wreck. You work two days of that shift, then two days off. Then, you start over again. So, you never got your circadian rhythms sorted out. You were sort of a mess. It was physically difficult.

Q: You were doing this from 1982 to?

USREY: 1984.

Q: 1982 to 1984.

USREY: Shultz was secretary, then Haig briefly.

Q: Did you get any feel for the White House versus Haig?

USREY: A little bit. The guy we reported to, our policy entry point was Jerry Bremer, the last of the great executive secretaries. Jerry would say, “Put Bud McFarlane on the phone.” In those days, we listened in. It was permissible to listen in.

Q: It was the military.

USREY: In fact, we were instructed to. Now, it's completely verboten. So, we overheard some pretty interesting conversations. I remember a particularly interesting and heated conversation between Bob Pelletreau and Reggie Bartholomew in Beirut, over some issue they disagreed about. But, we had little contact with the White House. I don't have any great stories to relate. Maybe you can think of one, and it will remind me.

Q: Ollie North, that was early days for Ollie North.

USREY: Ollie was a little later. He was there, but he did hibusiness when I was in Bilbao, the Iran-Contra business.

Q: Yes.

USREY: That was a little later. That was around 1985.

Q: What was the feeling when Haig left and Shultz came in? How had Haig been perceived within the Foreign Service ranks, particularly in Washington, at that point?

USREY: My view is somewhat representative. I think it was rather an odd appointment to begin with. He was a colonel at the NSC when he started. Nixon promoted him to general, and then NATO supreme commander. He was a Peter Principle example in the extreme. I thought his behavior when Reagan was shot sort of confirmed his fringe mentality. It was very strange. It was really worrisome, the behavior at that level. Personally, I was disdainful of him, and was glad to see him go. Shultz, on the other hand, was liked and respected by the career Foreign Service. I, once, when Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Shamir was in Washington on a visit, Shultz brought Shamir into the Operations Center. It was late, around 10:00. He must have been at a dinner or something, and he brought Shamir in to see the operations center. He came over to me and pointed to me and said, “This guy knows where Djibouti is.” Shamir grinned. I guess Shultz had never heard of the

country. He thought it was impressive that someone knew where it was. But visits like that and contact between Shultz and the Foreign Service were important for morale. In fact, we have this facility right now due to George Shultz. It's a miracle he got the money at the time to do this. He was a neat guy.

Q: Our organization just gave him an award for outstanding American diplomat, which was extremely well received. I think George Shultz, out of all the secretaries of state... You might say the Acheson and the Marshall time... But after that, he's the one that people really like.

USREY: A normal individual, if I can use that term.

Q: He was very solid and got things done.

USREY: Solid. He had firm convictions. He was no-nonsense. He had the president's confidence. There were some very strange people in that position, in my opinion, before and after him. I think the one we have now is pretty solid. I haven't worked much with him, so I don't know. The operations center is a funny place. You are in that room. You are seeing some of the most sensitive stuff. You see communications that only Department principals see, and maybe even sometimes things that some principals don't see. Maybe “P” would see it, but “M” wouldn't, or “E” wouldn't. I knew what was going on during that period. Sometimes I would think how amazing some of the policy-level paperwork was. On the other hand, we were there as virtual bystanders. You weren't really involved in writing any of it, or clearing it. You were just moving stuff around. I'm glad I did it, but I would never want to do anything like that again.

Q: Did you get a feel about pecking order, or how the departmenworked?

USREY: Totally. I had a virtual ignorance beforehand about the relationship between the principals and what bureaus were players, and how that whole thing worked. Even an official with a relatively weak power base, if he knew the right people, could be powerful

in his position. I absolutely learned how the department operated. It was not always in a gratifying way. Some of the stuff was really strange. The department was a complicated organism. You see it best, I think, if you are staffer. The good thing was we didn't have to work overtime, the bane of the Foreign Service. You got your differential and your parking pass, a little extra money for the shift hours. You worked 40 hours a week, and that was it. It was fun. It was good. So, I did that for that period, and moved on.

Q: This was in 1984?

USREY: December 1983.

Q: Where did you go?

USREY: I had been selected for university training, at that point, at the Kennedy School, which didn't begin until the summer. So, I had this six-month gap. I ended up doing what I have most enjoyed. The thing that I got up and looked forward to the most was the Board of Examiners. I did that for six months. I really enjoyed that.

Q: I spent some time with that. It really is. It's an intellectuaexperience; meeting the new people, observing. Talk about it a bit.

USREY: I wasn't really looking forward to it, but it was the perfect fit. I guess I was a FS-2 at the time. Anyhow, that was as low as they went to bring in over there. The Board was mostly senior people, but there were a few mid-level members. It was a perfect thing, so I could have that six month bridge into university training. I came aboard in January; I guess it was, after a couple weeks leave. It was right after the Foreign Service written exams. The Board was gearing up for another round of oral examinations, and then assigning teams to do orals, both in Washington and around the country. There was a training program they put me through on scoring, how the scoring system works. There is a certain art. I was always frustrated because they didn't use the whole scale. They all clustered around 5.3, 5.6.

Q: When I did it, you could go from 70 up to 100, and yet yocouldn't get away from keeping it between 70 and 75.

USREY: I fought that for six months, and lost entirely. I said, “You have this scale, use it.” What you would see, of course, were a lot of people who were not very good. There were a lot of people who were hard to distinguish among. Then, you had a small number of brilliant candidates. If you could attract them, that would be great. But we needed to give them scores that were at the high end of the scale... I said, “Give them a 9.9. These are people we want immediately, jump them up to the front.” I lost that thing. I did enjoy several aspects. One thing I enjoyed was meeting the Foreign Service candidates. The morning of the oral examination process, they were nearly catatonic with fear. They were terribly nervous. You saw them sort of relax during the day. I enjoyed seeing how they handled hypothetical questions. I found that the time went very fast. I liked the travel. I got to go to Boston for two weeks. I got to go to San Francisco for two weeks, and Chicago. I didn't get in fancy trips like Honolulu or Alaska, but I got to go to those, and they were fine.

Q: I did it and spent three weeks in San Francisco. I was wondering whether you saw a difference between Boston and San Francisco, the candidates, or not?

USREY: That's a good question. I think I did. Now that you mention it, I believe I did see a difference. Well, each stop produced a few top brilliant people whom I thought we should be proud to have in the Foreign Service. I think the group out west was the bigger group of mediocre scores, that was my recollection. Chicago too.

Q: In San Francisco, we were looking to pass. We weren't trying to show how tough we were. Yet, we sort of developed over the months a standard. We had a hard time meeting it. These weren't just because they were western types. These were Princetons and others who had come west to do graduate studies or something. But, it was almost as though they had sunk too long the lotuses of California, or something like that. They just didn't seem to have the awareness of events. Of course, they have lousy newspapers out there.

USREY: I was going to mention that. For a city that prides itself on being the cultural capital of the west, or used to, San Francisco has awful papers. The Chronicle and the Examiner were the two papers, I think. They were awful. It's like the Gainesville Register. It is awful. LA Times is a good newspaper.

Q: But, you get at least something. Go to Houston, and it's athough you've fallen off the edge of the world.

USREY: It's crap. Chicago has good papers. I always liked the Boston Globe. It's pretty thin after that. Maybe they read the Wall Street Journal out there or something. I was shocked at the newspapers. Of course, San Francisco is different, with a reputation of being sort of goofy. I enjoyed it. I went out to Yosemite. I had rented a car. Did you ever go out there?

Q: Oh, yes.

USREY: God, it's pretty. The travel was fun, but I also enjoyed the work. At night, you're done. At 5:00, you go out and get a drink, and you go for a place to eat; all on somebody else's nickel, and a jog in the morning. One of the secretaries who supported the team there was a jogger. So, she would pick me up at the hotel, and we'd go down to the Golden Gate Park and jog in the fog. You certainly don't take any work home with you, but you definitely put in an honest day's work. We were always tired at the end of the day, but also somewhat gratified.

Q: There was always a great deal of emphasis on minority recruiting. Overall, during the six months you were there, what was your feeling about minority candidates?

USREY: You mean, were there enough of them coming through?

Q: Were there enough of them coming through, or were we straining,in order to recruit people? How did you feel about it?

USREY: I think the focus on upward mobility was done more in the recruitment part of BEX, that travels to speak on campuses. We were never asked to use differential scoring or criteria for minority candidates. With that said, there would be candidates who would come through singly, for an exceptional test. It was never explicitly clear that they had not passed the written exam, but sometimes it was fairly obvious. I recall one man from DOD, an Asian American man, who was an SES type at DOD. It was clear that the Department wanted him assigned to a senior position. We assumed we were supposed to rubber stamp that. Although he was a very nice man, he was clueless on many of the kinds of questions we would ask typical oral exam candidates. I asked him to talk about the American labor movement, but it was clear he had no idea what to say. We gave him a correspondingly low score. I'm not sure the Board's front office was happy. We also examined candidates for specialist programs, like Mustang, who were not as strong as our typical examinees.

Q: This is sort of what you might expect. What about women? Thiwas the beginning of a significant inflow of women, wasn't it?

USREY: The class-action suit was actually going on. That was news, both in the papers and the buzz along the halls. That they had been discriminated against. Those women won that suit, as you know.

Q: Oh, yes. Allison Palmer kicked that through.

USREY: That's it. So, the Palmer suit was out there. I think there was a time when we were beginning to see significant increases in the numbers of women taking the test, passing the written, and coming through. There were some very impressive women. I don't have any other memories. Again, I never got any political guidance saying “Bring more women in.” Did you get that sort of thing?

Q: No, but you kind of felt it behind. I was doing it in 1975, 1976. Usually, if there's a woman being interviewed, there were three of us, a woman being one of the examiners.

USREY: That was the unstated outcome.

Q: I mean, this was just done. It was orders, or something.

USREY: Oh.

Q: The problem there was the women were usually tougher than thmen.

USREY: You mean women examiners.

Q: Yes, women examiners. It was sort of “By God, I earned my stripes the hard way, I'm not going to see somebody just walk into it.” The two men would find ourselves arguing, “Come on, give her a break.”

USREY: One thing I do recall is being aware of the fact that while there were some good examiners, it was clear, in general, that the folks assigned there were not on the fast track to the top of the Foreign Service. There were exceptions, obviously, but generally these were people on retirement assignments or they were somewhat disgruntled. You could tell a few people were disaffected. I thought it was an incredibly important function. You were deciding what the intake of the new Foreign Service was. It was fundamentally important, fundamental to everything. Why the Department wouldn't value, why that wouldn't be an assignment that would have value, I never knew. But, you had to be a desk officer or a staffer, because it got you the right kinds of onward assignments. So, the very, very best people didn't go over there, in general. I was very aware of that.

Q: It was a parking place. It was also fill-in assignments. I know when I was there, I was between assignments. I went to Seoul as consul general, but I was waiting for a senior seminar. Very definitely, it was a parking place. It's unfortunate, the same thing happens,

even worse in a way, I understand there is no particular competition to put our very best foot forward as the officers who run the basic officer's course. They should be the top of the top.

USREY: You should be ordered, assigned, into these things. That's one of the things that's wrong with the State Department, and continues to be wrong. We have somewhat over the age-old assumption that only political and economic officers can do the tough analysis and do tough jobs. You see a much more egalitarian spread of assignments these days. There are two kinds of progress in the Foreign Service, and the two are unrelated. One is promotions, and the other is assignments. They are related at the end, but you can work along, and do a good job, and get your promotions at a pretty steady pace, but you really have to lobby and get politically involved to get the right assignments. It's a problem.

Q: In the long run, assignments are what determine your progress,upward and onward.

USREY: That's right. So, they do link later. To the extent, working at the BEX is not valued, and doing the other kinds of work we're talking about, directing the A100 thing, is critically important. I agree. So, people see a less than sterling side of the service.

I left BEX that summer, and went to FSI for the Quantitative Analysis course, for about three weeks, to freshen my math skills, and then left for the Kennedy School in August.

Q: You were at the Kennedy School at Harvard for how long?

USREY: It was a one-year master's program. It was a master's in Public Administration, one year, from August 1984 to June 1985. Then, I had a direct transfer to Bilbao, Spain as principal officer.

Q: Okay, let's talk about the Harvard School. What was youimpression of it, when you got there?

USREY: You go up there, somewhat in awe of the reputation of the place. The neat thing about the Kennedy School is that once you're in the system, you could choose from a vast matrix of course offerings in the Kennedy School, the Business School, Harvard College, MIT, Tufts, etc. In preparation fro Spain I took an undergraduate course in Modern Spanish History.

Q: You knew you were going to Spain?

USREY: Yes. You could only take about eight courses in a year, four and four, or five and five. In that sense, it was frustrating. For a person like yourself, we've read a lot in the Foreign Service... I had one course that had 11 texts. It was hard work, even by Foreign Service standards. It was a two-year program crammed into one. It was pretty rigorous, I think. But, I did find in the spring semester, I got away from courses based on heavy papers. Thank Goodness, because my third kid was born at that point, and I had a good deal of family responsibilities in the spring. I did find the courses were uneven. Some were superb, and some were a little experimental.

One I took there by a someone called Ron Heifetz, son of Joshua Heifetz, the cellist. It was experimental, bordering on odd. He was from the medical school. He had an MD in psychiatry, but was teaching a course in the Kennedy School on management and mobilizing human resources. He used certain techniques such as, we would have these informal sessions, between lectures. Each session had a rotating chairman. The chairman was supposed to listen to the conversation, and not be a participant, but note two or three significant words, which, in the context of the discussion, seemed to have particular significance. Heifetz subscribed to the Jungian theory that we all speak the same language. This presupposes that all humans, regardless of their spoken language, share a pool of “primal” words or signals.. So, these words selected in these informal sessions were supposed to signify something in that context. By using a dictionary that listed ancient word roots, we were supposed to see that a given word in English would have a different, but significant meaning in, say, Sanskrit or Latin. Hence the common “language.”

Some women loved it. They broke down in tears. People wept openly in the course. It was a very emotional and draining thing. I found it weird. The economics course I took and some of the other stuff was world-class. It was uneven, but of a high level overall.

Q: Well, what were you supposed to get out of this?

USREY: Well, you had a fair amount of choice. There were some requirements, but the choice was pretty open. The basic philosophy of the Kennedy School and its degree program, in both public policy and public administration, is that bureaucrats are not passive, administrative types. These guys should be entrepreneurs. They should mobilize. We did case studies. We used the business school approach to case studies about people who were public figures, such as the mayor of New York, who had actually in an entrepreneurial fashion mobilized resources, had made policy, and had taken the initiative. The premise was that a good public servant is a good entrepreneur, a bit of a leader, and not just someone who is receptive, and waiting for the regulations to come down, and stamp the paper, but rather a dynamic shaper of policy. The courses had the flavor of that. I took a number of courses. I took microeconomics, and a very interesting course by a genius called Howard Raiffa, on negotiations theory. Raffa was a dual professor at the business school and at the Kennedy School. He had these mathematical models for negotiation. He made us analyze various approaches. Do you know what a Dutch auction is? Do you know the difference between a Dutch auction and an English auction?

Q: No.

USREY: An English auction is one that you and I know where you see an item for sale, and the bidding starts, and it goes higher and higher. The winner is the one who finally bids the highest price. No one exceeds that bid. The Dutch auction is where you bidding starts very, very high, and it goes down. The first person to raise his hand, that's it. He has done a mathematical analysis of which negotiation process results in sale prices closest to the true value of the object, and so on. It was fascinating stuff. You would get different

prices for, say, that desk, using a Dutch auction, than an English one, and why? What does it mean about the process of negotiation? So, we applied some of these approaches to the Middle East peace process. I got a lot better grades than I did in my undergraduate days. I guess I was motivated. I was exhausted and tired, and when I got out of there in June 1985, I was ready to move on to something practical.

Q: What was the student body like? Did you find yourself part othe process or were they coming from a different background?

USREY: Yes. There were some military people. It was called a mid-career. The name of the program was called a mid-career MPA, a mid-career Masters of Public Administration. This was for people like me who had been doing something for about 10 years, and were supposed to pause in the middle and reflect, and move on. There were some older people who were in their upper forties, maybe fifties. They seemed to not fit in with the majority. I was in my 30s. There was sort of a wide range of backgrounds. Some people had come from NGOs, had worked for Save the Children, or Friends of the Earth. We weren't all government bureaucrats. There were a lot of military. The Pentagon poured a lot into this. There was a good number of foreign students from other countries, from Korea, and South Africa. Some of them were struggling o keep up with difficult material being presented in rapid-fire, colloquial English. There were some very, very bright people. I wouldn't say the quality of the students was uniform. I don't know whether the Kennedy School has worked that out, whether there is greater uniformity now. One or two didn't make it. They quietly just stopped coming. You realized they weren't academically able to complete it. But, most got through.

Q: You were on your way to Bilbao?

USREY: Yes. Looking forward to that.

Q: This was 1985?

USREY: Yes, the summer of 1985.

Q: You were there until when?

USREY: Summer 1988, a three-year tour in Bilbao.

Q: This is a small little coast city one doesn't hear about, but you're right in the middle of a real mess there, with the Basques. What was the post like, and what was the situation?

USREY: Well, I was the principal officer. Besides myself, there was a junior officer who did the consular work, and some political reporting. We also had a secretary/communicator. She used one of those old teletype machines where you would encrypt a classified message and send it to Madrid for onward transmission. Anyway, the Basque region, because of sheepherder immigrants to the U.S., played an important role in Congress.

Q: Oh, yes. Nevada played a very large role in various immigratioprograms.

USREY: It was quite remarkable. They had special laws written on immigrant visas for Basque sheep herders that were outside the normal quota process, which was amazing. I think that's why the post was... (End of tape)

So the issues we mainly followed were ETA terrorism and morgenerally, Basque separatism.

Q: The name is spelled E - t - a?

USREY: Yes, ETA, which is an acronym for, “Basque fatherland, and freedom,” or something like that. The ambassador was Tom Enders at the time. He was extremely interested in this phenomenon for a number of reasons. Felipe Gonzales had just gotten elected a couple years before as prime minister of Spain, a leftist socialist with a somewhat anti-American, anti-NATO bent. He had gotten elected on the campaign promise that he would subject Spain's continuing membership in NATO to a referendum. If

the people said, “pull out,” he would hold to it. He probably regretted that later, once he got in office. But, the referendum was coming up, and we were worried sick that the alliance, for the first time, would have a member country withdraw voluntarily. It was a real danger. So, in the months, weeks, leading up to the NATO referendum, Enders was calling for reports from the constituent posts. There was one in Seville, one in Barcelona, and Bilbao, and the big embassy in Madrid. All the posts were reporting on what it looked like in the regions. It was very, very close. The Spanish people narrowly voted to remain in NATO. There were five of the Spanish autonomies where it lost. These were the Basque country, Madrid, Barcelona, and then Navarra, which is the province right next to the Basque country, where Pamplona is, and for reasons that are different, the Canary Islands. Enders was very worried. The White House was concerned that they were going to have Spain pull out of the NATO alliance during the Cold War.

The second reason Bilbao was important is because Spain joined the EU. Spain and Portugal joined the EU in 1986, so there were worries about the economic transition. But, in the middle of all this, there was this wave of ETA terrorism, that was on a big upswing, blowing up police and judges, and military guys up there. So, my job was to not make contact with, of course, ETA, but we did have indirect contacts with something called Iterri Batasuna, which is like the Sinn Fein of ETA. It was a party that was the political wing of the ETA, and they had a seat in the Basque parliament. But, more important was the Basque Nationalist Party, the moderate, conservative, mainstream Basque party, which held the Basque presidency... So, I did a lot of reporting. Enders said it was good, and Jack Binns, who was the DCM liked it. Then, when Reg Bartholomew arrived later, he took an interest, I guess, partly encouraged by Enders, in the Basque issues. I always got lots of attention and lots of money for representation. So, I was sort of in a neat position. A signal of the importance which they attached to the Basque country was when we went through, again, one of these post-cutting exercises. The Department basically said, “Embassy, Spain, or mission Madrid, you're going to have to lose one of your constituent

posts." Bilbao was the logical one in my opinion. Barcelona was big, a big city with several million people.

Q: The Olympics were coming up too, weren't they?

USREY: That would be later. They just had the soccer World Cup in Spain. In Seville, something like 20 million tourists went through Andalucia, every year, many of them American. It would seem inconceivable to me that it wouldn't be Bilbao that would be closed. Enders, at the time, so cherished the reporting on the Basque stuff, that they closed Seville, and kept Bilbao open. That was amazing. I took that as a signal that I could keep doing more of what I was doing, so I was all over the place.

We had a pretty interesting district. We had the Basque country, the three provinces of that: Navarra, La Rioja, where they grow the wine, Cantabria, just to the west, where Santander is, and then Asturias, on the north-central coast. They were all unique areas, and I traveled to them frequently, and made many contacts. We had an IV program, and sent lots of people to the states. It was an interesting time. Spain was working through an important transition. Spain had had a dictator for a long time, who had repressed the hell out of the Basques. In fact, ETA was a response to Franco. Under the Franco reign, it was illegal to use Basque in school. You couldn't speak your own language. One story was that Basque children would be forced to wear a special bracelet if they used a Basque word in class. It was sort of a snitch system. You could snitch on your fellow pupils. It was humiliating. I really think Franco contributed to violent Basque separatism. The attacks, however, were directed at Spanish military and police, and not at Americans.

We did receive one communication once from them, which was a warning. I don't know if it was real or not, but it certainly scared me. These guys were the most deadly, efficient terrorists going. They are very good. You did not want to be targeted by them. I was worried that we might have problems with dependents and security. In fact, it didn't work out that way. I had a wonderful time in Spain. It's a great country.

Q: What was our stand? Was it that we didn't have a dog in this fight or that we were mouthing, “We want to see a unified Spain?” or “Let the people choose?” How were we treating this?

USREY: Mostly, we didn't have a dog in the fight. I still look to Spain when we talk about, for example, the Kashmir dispute. I look at the Spanish model as the best model I've ever seen for solving regional, ethnic, autonomy disputes. They have a system o“autonomias,” autonomous regions, however many there are, 25 or something. Each autonomy has its own parliament, its own flag. Basque and Spanish had coequal status, as languages under the Constitution. They had their own police. They had their own parliament, and the Basque country was one of only three in Spain that had the right to raise its own taxes. They raised taxes locally, and then as a result of a negotiation, paid back to Madrid, stuff that was central, like foreign affairs, defense, communications; and kept the rest for local schools and stuff. So my question was, what did ETA want? They had their own president. But, they had a list of seven demands to be met by Madrid before “armed struggle” could stop. The list was a little slippery, intended to change. They basically were representing a very tiny percent of the Basque people. They weren't typical. The Basques rejected them too. We really didn't have a dog. We were antiterrorism, obviously, so whatever was pro-terrorist, we were against. We strongly supported the Madrid government as a NATO ally, and a democracy and trading partner, and all that stuff. But, we kept a low profile. I certainly didn't go out making speeches about the “insidious” ETA. My job was to stay in touch with that end of the spectrum, and sort of report on where it was going, which I did.One thing you did hear from all Basques was their affinity towards the U.S. You may know about it. During World War II, when France was occupied, the Basques evidently played a particularly important role in moving resistance and apparently some U.S. intelligence, and troops through the passes in the Pyrenees into Spain.

Q: Well, there were a lot of flyers who went out that way.

USREY: Yes. Whenever, you got into these long boozy lunches with the Basque PNV (the Basque National Party) contacts, who on the one hand, denounced terrorism, they would say, “Remember the Basques, we were your friends and we have never been paid back for that,” sort of suggesting that we should be more helpful in fighting terrorism. I had no instructions in this area, ans so I was unable to be responsive. We didn't. The average Basque was a perfect citizen. I would like to have them all come here to the USA. They were hardworking, quiet, family-centered, industrious, smart. All the bankers in Spain are Basques. All the heavy industry, steel, and shipbuilding were all started by Basques. They was not sitting under olive trees, taking siestas. These are the workers of Spain up there. They are cool people.

Q: Have we seen within the ETA movement, a Marxist, a Maoist, typthing, or was it pretty much self-grown?

USREY: In other words, did they receive foreign support?

Q: Or was their philosophy Maoist, or what have you?

USREY: It wasn't Maoist. It wasn't scorched earth. I read carefully the Basque press. That's how my Spanish got to be so good. I read something like six papers a day. One of them was Egin, the Iterri Batasuna publication, where you got the ETA party line. It contained a fair amount of Marxist lexicon and imagery that was popular in Europe after WWII. So, you had that. But, the truth of it was that it was pretty much home grown, and it was a phenomenon specifically responsive to the dictatorship. Franco had started it all. The French too played an important part, because again, those Pyrenees were there, and if the Spanish had come chasing after those guys, and could give hot pursuit into France, ETA would have faced a tougher situation. But, France had its own Basque region. They didn't have a Basque problem, because they had different historical roots than the Spanish did. But, we always thought the French could do more in security cooperation. The French didn't particularly like Felipe Gonzales. I stayed in close touch with the French consul

general about this, over the period. Toward the end of my tour however, the French attitude changed. ETA had committed a few large-scale attacks in France that produced innocent victims. The French said, “Enough already.” They started cracking down, and made some arrests. Suddenly, ETA got very quiet. Their network was broken up. It looked like when I left, and the few years after, it might be going the way of the dinosaur. But it has come back. ETA, for the last two years has been active again. So, it's not gone. It only takes five or six people to do this. Terrorism doesn't require large numbers of operatives.

Q: I know. Speaking on the NATO thing, were you all pounding thpavement, escorting NATO?

USREY: We were poll taking. Obviously, when people ask questions, we would say, “Alliance is important. It is in Spain's interest,” but it wasn't so much proselytizing, because that could have backfired in that environment. Ambassador Enders wanted to know how bad the numbers were. So, it would be local polls. We would do our own “feel of the street” reporting. It was very touchy. It lost, as I said, in Bilbao. I don't think Enders wanted to preside over the unprecedented step of a NATO member pulling out of the alliance. He is a brilliant guy, by the way, very smart.

Q: Oh, yes.

USREY: A really impressive man. I liked him. What drove the NATO thing? Spain was going through this socialist phase. You know how some of the European countries went through this phenomenon? The Italians did it. They were being goofy. Alphonso Guerra was Felipe's deputy prime minister. He was a real nut. They fancied themselves as sort of the opposition to Franco. They had come in with the job of carrying on the fight from Moncloa Palace. One thing that didn't help was, there was a NATO bombing range, up north, near Pamplona. I don't think we used it much, but there had been, over time, bombing operations by the U.S. Air Force in that area. That inflamed local opinion though. The Americans were seen as dropping bombs on a NATO ally. It was stupid really to

do that. I think we finally stopped that policy. That didn't help. But, America wasn't really popular then. We had our image problems in Spain in the mid-1980s.

Q: What was the root of this?

USREY: The lack of popularity?

Q: Yes.

USREY: They didn't like Reagan. Few Europeans did, except for Maggie Thatcher. Most Europeans were very disdainful of Ronald Reagan. The cowboy, sort of, image. There was that. What else was happening around the world in the mid-1980s that I should be remembering here? Vietnam still rankled quite a bit, even though the war was over. That was always highly unpopular with the Europeans. Somehow, Russia was viewed, and other countries with socialist leaderships, as more enlightened powers somehow, incredibly. Now, it couldn't be more different. You have a conservative government with the Spanish president now, Jose Maria Asnar. They couldn't be more for us. He's almost as pro-American as the Italian, Silvio Berlusconi. He's fanatically pro-American. I think after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Gulf War, and now Afghanistan and 9/11, I think America's image is quite different. But, we were fighting an image problem. Then, there was the Iran-Contra scandal, and our Central America policy. Spain views our Cuba policy as, frankly goofy, which I don't disagree with them on. It's a former colony of Spain. So, there were a lot of little international things that we were at odds with Spain on.

Q: Were you there at the time we bombed Libya?

USREY: Yes.

Q: How did that play?

USREY: It didn't play well at all. Enders came up on his first official big, two-day trip to the Basque country. I was worried that I wouldn't handle this right. I managed to get the

Basque president to throw a lunch for him at the official Basque residence, up in Vitoria. It was delicious food, and it helped to put him in a good mood. Then, the president brought up the attack on Libya. He said, “What was America's thinking on that?” Enders made some seemingly flip comment. I couldn't believe it. They all reacted. If you recall, we dropped a bomb on Qadhafi's tent, and almost killed one of his kids, or something. Enders said, “He'll think twice before doing that again.” I'm sure the Spaniards thought that was an odd comment from the U.S. ambassador about something as serious as bombing another country's capital. So, a lot of the things we were doing... When was Granada? That was later.

Q: It was about 1982, or something like that.

USREY: The Europeans thought that was laughable. The spectacle of the world's most powerful military unable to communicate with itself via military radios. That was not seen as our high point.

Q: The Soviet Union was going through early Gorbachev, and althat. Was there a communist party? If there was, how did they stand?

USREY: There was a communist party, and a pro-communist labor movement. The communists enjoyed a certain esteem in Spain. In fact, you'll recall that famous incident when the civil guards opened fire on deputies in the Cortes, the Spanish Parliament?

Q: Yes.

USREY: Only two people didn't dive for cover. One was the former Spanish prime minister who remained standing in the middle of the line of fire, which was very noble. The other one was the head of the communist party. Its labor party was the strongest in the Basque country, where they made the steel and built the ships. Remember La Pasionaria, the old woman who made the speech?

Q: She came out of the Civil War.

USREY: She was Basque, and from Bilbao. Because of the heavy industry there, it was an ideal environment for left-wing support. But, your question was?

Q: I was wondering how did you treat the communist party there?

USREY: We had occasional contacts with their people. They were correct with us. This is the Cold War. Spain was slower than most European countries to come around, and jettison the old Marxist rhetoric. The dictatorship had been there. So, we didn't focus on the communist issue. My mandate was the Basque nationalist movement, so we stuck to that task. I had very good relations with the Basque government. It was really funny because the Basques just didn't like Madrid. Madrid was the enemy. They had their own government in Vitoria. They didn't have contact with Madrid-based embassies. I was sort of like the U.S. ambassador up there. It was kind of fun. They did everything through me. If they wanted to send a message, I passed the message to Washington, via Madrid. We didn't get many back, but when we did, it was fun to deliver theI sort of had a direct policy line into an elected regional president. It was very rewarding. I think we helped during those three years. We helped report to Washington on trends in Basque separatism. More important, I think the Basques understood the U.S. better because of our work. We did a pretty good job, given the number of people we had up there. It's still my favorite country. I love Spain.

Q: Did you find that when you talked to Spaniards not of Basque descent? I'm going back to my time when I was consul general in Naples. When the northern Italians would come down, they would look down their noses at the barbarians, and what they called the “Mezzogiorno,” the southern part. Were the Basques held in a certain amount of disdain?

USREY: There was loathing of Basque terrorism in Madrid. They had blown up the prime minister. Remember that assassination that resulted in the prime minister's car on top of an apartment building roof?

Q: Yes.

USREY: They were knocking off admirals. It was very, very bad. Obviously, they had the right to be highly opposed to the Basque terrorist element. But, per capita income, even then was higher up in the Basque country. With the Basques, some had blonde hair and clear eyes. They would refer to the Castilians as “monkeys of the Meseta,” essentially Moors, who lived on the wrong side of the straits. The Basques felt they were the Europeans, and they really related more to Europe. I don't know if you were in Naples then, but there was a fashion to talk about “Europe of the regions,” Corsica, and the Basques, instead of existing nation-states.

Q: The Catalans as well... That has sort of died, I think.

USREY: It has somewhat died out. It's funny, because with a single European currency, you would think that that would still be alive. Basques could say our future lies in relating more to Brussels, than to Madrid. That is sort of gone. But, despite all the political and social progress and the fact that Spain is a very rich country now, it's like the twelfth in world economy, very prosperous place, there is this small group of ETA nuts who act as if none of this stuff ever happened. It's shocking.

Q: You left there when?

USREY: July 1988. I had the Fourth of July reception, and then left the next day.

Q: Well, this is probably a good place to stop. So, we'll pick this up. You're leaving Bilbao in July 1988, and withers, so we'll know where to pick it up.

USREY: Panama, Panama City, to my great regret.

Q: By the way, how did your wife, coming from Bolivia...

USREY: She's from Connecticut. No foreign born wife for me.

Q: How did she find Spain?

USREY: She liked it. Jamie has always been extremely adaptable. I've been lucky that way. There's an American school in Bilbao. We had a little American school. She got involved over there. We got a small State Department grant. We had small kids, one little tiny baby, who had been born in Cambridge, whom we took with us when she was several months old. She had a ball. We were all happy there. It was a happy family time. It was good.

Q: Okay, we'll pick this up in the summer of 1988, when you're ofto Panama.

USREY: Yes.

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Q: Today is the 22nd of April 2002. Gary, you are off to Panama. You said, “Much to your regret.” So, you were in Panama from 1988 to when?

USREY: The tour was interrupted because of the U.S. invasion to topple Noriega, so I got out in the spring of 1990. It wasn't even two full years. It was April 1990, something like that.

Q: Okay, well it's an interesting period. I would like to capture it. What were you told before you went there, because tensions were rising, as I recall?

USREY: Tensions were rising. Our policy was to recognize a president who had been deposed. This was a guy called Delvalle, who was being kept by the U.S. in a safeplace. Noriega was the head of the Panamanian defense forces, and defacto ruler of Panama. Since we didn't recognize the government, we knew the situation we were going into was highly irregular. There was no Panamanian Embassy in Washington. Panama did have a consulate in Tampa, Florida. It was headed by a woman close to Noriega, and still issued visas for the regime. I was the one in charge of going down with a handful of passports. People went with me that summer to get visas. We were issued visas that would get us into Panama, but we didn't have license plates, or diplomatic IDs. It was strange. That led to later problems culminating in the invasion. So, we arrived in the summer, in the midst of an enormous thunderstorm in July 1988. We took up residence that same night in our apartment. They all lived in apartments there.

Q: Before you got there, were they telling you back in Washington, on the desk or something, “This is how we see it?” What were we thinking about at that time?

USREY: Well, I think it was a really myopic operation by the U.S. It led to my first dissent message later on, in conjunction with some other colleagues at the post. We had this harsh rhetoric. President Bush I had this sort of public rhetoric, harshly critical of Noriega, but not matched by actions on the ground, leaving the Embassy out there dangling. But, at the time, no one envisioned the invasion or prior events that led to the annulment of the election results that Jimmy Carter observed when he was there, and called Noriega publically on electoral fraud. So, we didn't have an end game or an end vision. We just sort of pretended that it wasn't there. We just hoped the thing would resolve itself. It got worse and worse.

It's a very strange country. If you've ever been to Panama, you drive by the former Canal Zone, and you can see slums and shanty towns everywhere. Then there's a line delineating the former Canal Zone, which is neat, and sort of manicured. It's a very strange place, even though the Zone is gone. We had the strangest country team meetings there.

I think it was the most unique in the world. We had three coequal people at the table. Two of them weren't under the control of the ambassador. One, a four-star general, was the unified commander in charge of SOUTHCOM, who reported to the JCS. Then, there was the head of the Panama Canal Commission, an independent U.S. agency due to be turned over to the Panamanians in 1999 under the Carter-Torrijos Treaty. So, we were in a turnover transition game. So the Panamanians knew they were getting the canal and the revenues that accrued there, too. They knew that probably our military bases would go away, which they have largely done, although there is some stuff left. It was a surreal place.

Q: Well, what was your job?

USREY: I was a consul general, which was interesting. We had one consular agent in Col#n on the other side of the isthmus. I never worked with a consular agent before; he was an American shipping executive, but knew everybody in Col#n. He ran the agency out of his offices there. In Panama City the consular section was two blocks from the embassy, so we commuted back and forth a lot between the two. I recall one special feature of my consular work, taking care of former Canal Zone residents, or “Zonians.” Many of them had been born and raised in the Zone, and had considerable Congressional clout. We had to attend to the Zonians very meticulously. We had lots of Panamanians trying to get to the states. We had the usual panoply of visa fraud, arrest cases and all that sort of stuff. That picked up as tensions increased.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

USREY: When I got there, someone called Art Davis. This was his second political post. He had been ambassador to Paraguay. He was a shopping center magnate from Colorado. He was a Reagan appointee, and he was, frankly, ineffectual. He recently died, about a year ago. The DCM was John Maisto, whose name you probably have heard of. He is now over at the NSC. John was later ambassador to one or two countries in Latin

America. It was a pretty big embassy. Again, we had a military attach# and all that stuff, DEA. Then, we had this immense military operation with multiple bases, all around us. We had Howard Air Force Base, and Rodman Naval Base. It was unusual, in my experience.

Q: When you got there, running the consular section, one of the most important elements is to have a good relation with the police authorities in the country where you are. I take it the police authorities were exactly who we were having very bad relations with.

USREY: They were part of the problem. That led later to a confrontation on TV, which I got a little notoriety for. This is after the annulment of the elections and the departure of the ambassador. I think Maisto was charge at that point. They had arrested an American citizen whom they accused of espionage against Panama. They wouldn't acknowledge they had him, or give access, or anything. I went down to the jail, on instructions from the front office, where we knew he was being held. I met with the Panamanian defense officials, a bunch of thugs really, who ran the jail. I said, “Either you give me access to this guy, which we are entitled to under the Geneva Convention, or I'm going to go out and hold a press conference to explain what had happened.” Our PAO had arranged for a sizable contingent of international press to be available just in case. The Spanish, British international, and all that, The Washington Post, Miami Herald. I was planning to announce also that we would be limiting issuance of U.S. visas to Panamanians. I had pretty strong marching orders to be tough. They said, “I would advise you not to go to the press.” I did it anyway, since I was denied access to the prisoner. It was on TV news. My name was in the regime-controlled newspapers for a few days afterward, calling me a “supuesto,” or “alleged” Consul General, because we didn't have any credentials. So, they played little head games like that.

Much later, the guy got out of jail, but it was after the invasion. So we worked in this odd, sort of status quo, until Panamanian elections in the spring of 1989, when, you might recall, former President Carter had come down to lead an international team of election observers. Carter and his team had been to different polling stations throughout the day.

They were staying at the Marriott, I think, near the Convention Center, where they were watching the results of the election being tallied. The story I heard was Carter, at the end of the day, decided to take a walk over to the Convention Center. They went over and looked at some of the final results that were being posted, and he said, “That doesn't tally with anything we saw.” They knew then that Noriega was fixing the numbers. Carter called a press conference and denounced the whole operation. Do you remember the opposition, Billy Ford, got all bloodied? Noriega's so-called “dignity battalions” beat up the candidates who had actually done very well. That is when we shifted our policy, including measures like sending the ambassador back to Washington, reducing Embassy staffing down to essential personnel of about 30 people, which included me. We also sent all the dependents home, including my family, of course, stepping up military exercises, and visa restrictions, and so on. This led to a very tense atmosphere that involved the Panamanians stopping U.S. personnel, and harassing them. Enlisted men were their favorite targets. They weren't officers and they felt they could hassle them. Often these personnel spoke no Spanish, didn't have valid ID documents. So the Panamanians would harass them, sometimes beat them up.

Tensions were rising rapidly during the summer of 1989. I managed tget away once every two or three months to come home for a quick visit.

Q: During this period, were we getting to the point of saying,” This isn't going to last?” Was the thought that we were going to come in there? What was the thought process?

USREY: What we were hoping for is what almost happened in, I believe, October of that year. We knew there wasn't universal support for Noriega, especially among the PDF, Panama Defense Forces. We were hoping that would trigger some sort of officer revolt. That was our standard line. It did. There was a revolt that he crushed and put down. He killed a bunch of people in October. He was almost overthrown there. That led to a State Department legal position that Noriega's repression and interference with U.S. forces

in Panama gave U.S. the rights under the Canal Accords, and our having rights, to use military force against the regime. It was only a matter of time then before we would act.

Q: It was announced publicly that we could intervene?

USREY: I think that was conveyed via press briefings and so on. We probably didn't use “invade.” We probably used terms like “all necessary means.” There was a wide latitude of things we could use, including force. Between October and when it all went down in December, right before Christmas of 1989, it was really a question of when we were going to do it. SOUTHCOM abuzz with activity and meetings in the headquarters “tunnel” there that I wasn't privy to, and probably the ambassador wasn't. Then, during all this time, somehow John Bushnell came in to be the charge. I don't recall when Maisto left, and Bushnell came in. The switchover happened then. He was in charge of the mission. I had gone home for Christmas of 1989, like a lot of people. There was a big Christmas party at the residence. We all had flights out the next day to go home for Christmas. It was something like the 20th of December. I don't remember exactly what day. I joined my wife and family in the house they had rented in Falls Church in the expectation they would return to Panama soon. She woke me up in the morning. Do you recall when our Navy SEALs and paratroopers had landed in Panama? There was footage of the invasion on CNN. She said, “they have invaded Panama.” I got up and got some coffee and started watching TV. The phone rang a little later. It was the State Department saying, “Can you come in at 10:00 for a meeting?” I said, “Fine, I'll be in.” I got dressed, and then the phone rang again. They said, “Bring a suitcase.” So, I went into the meeting with the assistant secretary of Consular Affairs. She was the one from New Hampshire who got in trouble. Do you remember her?

Q: Oh, yes. I know whom you mean.

USREY: Sununu's sort of prot#g#. I went in there and they said that I was going to be on a plane back to Panama that night with Ambassador Davis, that the invasion was going on.

I was to head a team of consular officers to augment the Embassy's staff. So, we went in that night about 11:00, from Andrews. We got down there in the middle of the night. There was still shooting going on. It was an active war still. It wasn't completely over. We were met at the airport by a general wearing a flak jacket. We stayed at the BOQ at Howard Air Force Base. Things quieted down. By morning, it was safe to go into Panama City, so we got in a Black Hawk helicopter, and flew to SOUTHCOM, where they had the landing pad. It was on a hill in the back of the city. We were taken in an armored car down to the embassy. I didn't leave that building for about a week afterward. I missed Christmas. I ended up running a task force. All of us returnees had a specific task. Mine was running an embassy task force whose main function was to make sure Noriega didn't leave Panama through the airport. Our greatest fear was while we were looking for him, before we had him holed up in the Papal Nuncio's apartment, that he might get away. We didn't find him, as you recall. The concern was, in disguise or in a group with other people, Noriega would escape through Torrijos Airport, the big airport there. We kept getting these requests from other embassies for having their nationals evacuated. Since I effectively controlled the airport, I had to, at that table, with some military officers, approve up or down on requests to leave. The phone hardly stopped ringing for that period. That is what I did for five or six days, where we were eating MREs, and washing in the sink and so on. Without a change of clothes, it was pretty bad. Finally, things got normalized. They located Noriega, had him holed up. At that point, I was able to go home, a week or 10 days after Christmas for a short visit. I came back to wrap up my assignment. All of us wanted to break our assignments. We were sick of it. The mission appeared sympathetic to our situation.

Then, Ambassador Dean Hinton from Costa Rica came in. He was sworn in as the new ambassador. He brought some elements of his new team with him, over time. We were given agreement in principle by PER to leave if we wanted, but everything had to be approved by Hinton. I managed to curtail around April and get back to Washington. It was 11 months that I was separated from my family. The cumulative effect of U.S. policy on embassy staff had taken its toll. We were quite upset. The morale was poor. As I

say, three of us had already sent a dissent message to the Department concerning our Panama policy. We got an answer from Dennis Ross, then the Director of S/P.

Q: What were you dissenting on?

USREY: Basically our dissent message was that we didn't have a policy. Our non-policy had become the policy in Panama. We had this tough, “This will not stand,” public line. I'm referring to our policy before the invasion. This happened before the military action. Our message was that the U.S. should either accommodate to the situation, and deal with Noriega, the real leader, and tone down our strident anti-Noriega rhetoric, or do something about Noriega's abuses and take military action. Our existing policy was incoherent and it put our mission personnel in some danger. So, that was roughly the message.

Q: Did we cut out visas? Did we try to use the visa issuing policto bring pressure?

USREY: We did toughen our visa policy. We used the treasury OFAC office as well. Persons in the regime deemed to be formulators or implementers of Noriega regime policy were put on a blacklist and denied U.S. visas, which for Panamanians was a serious sanction. A lot of the Panamanians had U.S. bank accounts. So there was a lot of traveling by Panamanian elites back and forth to Miami. So, by listing Noriega supporters this way, and seizing their assets through Treasury OFAC sanctions, we were dealing a serious blow to the regime.

I will never forget, I was invited to a dinner party, along with Edward O'Donnell, our economic counselor. We were invited to the party by a guy who had a business in the Colon tax-free zone. They were probably up to no good. We knew all these guys were playing pretty crooked. During the dinner, a fax was being circulated that contained the names of those Panamanians on the blacklist. The embassy's list had been leaked and someone brought it to the party. They asked me, “Well, what about this list?”

Q: Did it include the host?

USREY: The host was on there, yes, whose name I won't mention. It included, certainly, members present at the dinner. I think the host was on there, too. We did the best we could do to deny that such a list actually existed. It required quite a bit of bobbing and weaving. But, in fact, it was a true copy of what we had put together in the embassy. A surreal moment.

Q: Did you see that by clamping down on this travel, and cutting off the United States as a place to go, was this having any effect, or was Noriega so in control that it really didn't make much difference?

USREY: Well, he was in control. We used to meet frequently with Panamanian intellectuals and some leftists who were deeply opposed to Noriega, but didn't know how to go about it. Frankly, they were chicken. We would meet, and effectively, they would be seeking our help to overthrow him. That was before we had a policy of doing it. Of course, we did so later. We reminded them of our own civil war, that sometimes bringing about political change involved personal risk. There were some desultory demonstrations in the streets, but when things got rough, and the PDF came in with tear gas or worse, the opposition bolted and went home to their middle-class neighborhood, and that was the end of that. There was never anything sustained. Our visa policy was building up pressure and Noriega was feeling pressure. When we started hitting the PDF and their families, in terms of travel and asset controls, that is when it really began to pinch. That is what led to that coup attempt in October. Then, we were on the rapid slide down to the invasion.

Q: There were times when they were talking about wives of officers, and military officers being harassed, and all that. Did the military send their dependents home?

USREY: Those military who lived on the base and under the unified command, I don't believe they did. In fact, all of the returnees, both dependents and Embassy employees, were civilians. I don't believe the military had to send their people home. Again, they lived in a different environment. They weren't out in the economy, as it were.

Q: Well, you came back with Ambassador Davis.

USREY: Arthur Davis.

Q: Arthur Davis. Did you feel there was any hand there? Was hdoing anything?

USREY: Not really. I have to tell you that during this period in which I was running the task force I mentioned, a colleague and I once had a question that needed an answer. It was a policy question. We went to Davis, who was eating an MRE in his office.

Q: This is "meals ready to eat."

USREY: Yes, meals ready to eat. He would have the military channel on with the cartoons. Daffy Duck or something was the cartoon on. He had a bottle of coke, or diet coke, and an MRE spread out. He was having dinner. We were in there going nuts in this room, trying to figure out what to do with these requests from other countries, and the Papal Nuncio's office. All these people were wondering whether they could leave, whether they could get out, and whether we could help them. But Davis really didn't seem engaged. The real policy work was being done by Mike Kozak, from the legal adviser's office. I can't think of his name. He came down from the State Department. Kozak and his team set up sort of a cell in the Foreign Ministry after the invasion. I think they really made the post-invasion policy over there. Ambassador Davis was not very engaged, not very effective.

Of course, when Dean Hinton came in, it was a whole different thing. We were then dealing with the civilian government, the one that should have gotten elected. The president was sworn in on a military base, as you recall. The whole thing was surreal. So, it was a quite unpleasant, odd chapter in my career. I'm not sure it helped my career much either. Anyhow, that was Panama.

Q: Did you get any feel for responsible, Panamanian citizens contacting the embassy, or contacting you, saying "Do something," or "Don't do something?"

USREY: Well, as I mentioned, with the contacts we had, we had plenty of opportunity to do it. They would say, “Would you please solve this?” There didn't seem to be any understanding or appreciation that this was their problem. That they had created this mess. Of course, the U.S. had been in Panama for years, in the Canal Zone, our military presence. We were intertwined, so it wasn't completely right to say that it was a solely Panamanian problem, but they were a pretty feckless group. Most of them had their money offshore. It wasn't a real country in some ways. I don't think those of us in the embassy who had regular contact with middle-class Panamanians, thought they were ever going to do anything. Their answer was to go to Disney World or Miami. It just wasn't serious. Although a number of Panamanians died in the invasion, certain claims of casualties were probably exaggerated. Through our doctrine of overwhelming military force, Noriega was removed and he's now in jail. But it probably wasn't our finest hour, either.

Q: I heard it said that when the American military first went in, they didn't do anything to protect the embassy, leaving it somewhat exposed. Nothing happened, but was that something that was apparent?

USREY: Yes, it was apparent. It manifested itself in several ways, one of which was a couple of RPG [rocket propelled grenades] holes punched through the... Because of the climate, these weren't very substantial walls in the chancery building, right on the Pacific. Right after the invasion began, the “dignity” battalion types - these Panamanian/Noriega-sponsored thugs came to the Embassy and opened fire with RPGs. Later, when we took possession of the embassy the next day, we could see two holes in the DCM's office. One went in one wall and out the other one. Had there been Americans there in that building, it would have been a blood bath. There would have been a much different cast to the invasion. Also, where the Americans lived was known to these guys, and they went to the neighborhood called Punta Paitilla, where they entered these big apartment buildings. They knocked on the doors of several American mission members who luckily weren't

there. They would have been captured or killed, or somehow abducted, had they been home. We were just lucky that there were no casualties. The military didn't tell us. It was operational secrecy. They can't tell the State Department they were invading.

Q: Well, how come the embassy was so empty?

USREY: Well, it happened in the middle of the night, on one hand. I was out of the country when it went down. I had to go back shortly after. There were people there, but it was Christmas time, the middle of the night, and we had no reason to be in the chancery at 1:00 a..m., or whenever it was. I didn't see it myself, but it is well known that CNN was reporting that scores of aircraft were leaving, that troops were en route in combat aircraft. Even though the embassy wasn't told, most of the Panamanians knew it was coming, I think. They didn't know when and where exactly. It was odd, is the best word I can use to describe the experience.

Q: When Noriega was in Nuncio's quarters, we started blaring pop music at them. It sent shivers up the spines of any of us who were in the diplomatic service. What the hell was that? It didn't sound like there was a civilian advisor somewhere saying, “Hey, fellows, this isn't funny.”

USREY: Exactly. There was very little adult supervision. This was all military psychological operations, psyops. They did this in Pakistan recently. They found that Taliban operative, an Al Qaeda guy, who was living, I believe, in a house in Pakistan. We played loud rap music all night long to keep him awake, and drive him crazy. That's the point of it. However, it also affects all the other neighbors in the area who are normally friends of the U.S. Hardly good P.R. Indeed, had we not found Noriega, the whole invasion would have been laughable. It was very much a military concept, from start to finish. It reflected, somewhat, this Balkanized U.S. presence in Panama: military, embassy, and Canal Commission. Very little policy coordination among the three.

Q: If I recall, our political advisor to POLAD CENTCOM had left, athat point, so there wasn't a political...

USREY: You mean SOUTHCOM. I think you're right. I think he wagone.

Q: The commander of the troops there was a guy who didn't brook another dissent or...

USREY: Can't recall his name. Can see him right now.

Q: He was sort of a feisty guy. At the same time, it was a combaoperation...

USREY: He was in the middle of the city, where the embassy was. Iwas crazy.

Q: In the city. It was sort of like turning the Rover boys looswithout any supervision.

USREY: To see the skyline, there was a banking center in Panama. There were lots of banks, Citibank, Bank of Spain, Chase, and everything, along the shore line. It was very pretty. You would come in from the air. The financial core of the country. After the invasion, these buildings were blackened and charred. There were black char marks at the side of these banks. It was really quite unbelievable. We were not involved in any way in the policy side of it, and the planning of it. Of course, with the operational planning, State never is. There were several attempts to go after the military and place some blame on not keeping the Embassy advised, if for no other reason than the safety of mission members. Congressman Murtha might have been one of the people. I can't remember who was leading that, but it never went anywhere. It was sort of an “all is well that ends well” thing. We got Noriega, and this was defined as a success.

Q: What were you doing with your task force to keep Noriega froleaving the country?

USREY: Well, let me see how this worked. We would get a request from, say, the Spanish embassy, or from one of the banks on behalf of an employee who wanted to leave. People were desperate. The families wanted to leave, so we would get names, and identification,

birth date, and all that sort of stuff, passport numbers, and all the names. We would then refer it, either on the phone, or through military liaison on the task force. Whatever chain we had, they would pass it to SOUTHCOM's people at the airport. The military people were actually screening people at the airport as they arrived to leave. We had a list of people who were approved. They would be carefully examined there, to make sure they weren't Noriega or anyone close to him. I never left the task force room. Some of the other people, such as our economic counselor, moved around the city a great deal. In fact, he went to the Central Bank and found that the PDF had attempted to loot the country's cash reserves before fleeing. I never really left the compound for about four days. It was horrific. I was sleeping right in the chancery. We needed a relatively senior State person on the phone saying, “We've vetted these requests. I know the French ambassador, and I know the Spanish ambassador. They vouch for these people.” So that was my function.

Q: When this was all over, was there any pitch to say, “Stay on,” odid they understand the situation and...

USREY: I think Hinton was sensitive to having just arrived. He was a man of considerable ego, if you recall. He was one of the great, sort of career ambassadors type.

Q: The imperial ambassador.

USREY: Yes. With a sharp mind, I must say. He ran a staff meeting that was legendary. He would make some opening remarks, and then would say, “Who has anything?” It was a random thing. He didn't like going around the table. Almost inevitably, if someone said something, he would either attack or critique their presentation. Consequently, few people would raise their hand. I think he sort of liked me. I don't think he knew much about consular affairs, and I could say, “Here is what is going on.” I didn't have many problems with him. He was hell on the military, he was very disdainful of PSYOPS, which he felt the military had no business doing. But, I remember a meeting in which he went around and asked what people's plans were for onward assignments. I said that I was bidding, in fact,

on the Consul General's job in Athens. It didn't work out, although CA/EX said it would push for me, but I didn't prevail. Anyhow, I told him I was hoping to go back early and start Greek training. He said, “So, you are, huh?” He made it very clear that he didn't really appreciate people bailing out of the Hinton embassy. But, my kids had already changed schools three or four times, and didn't want to come back. We were fed up with the whole situation. A lot of my colleagues did the same thing. Some stayed a little longer, and some left earlier. So, Hinton didn't like the fact, but in the end, I think it was the Department that had the final say. It wasn't Hinton who could approve it and sign it. It was PER. They were understanding. I came back and went to OES.

Q: You were in OES from when to when?

USREY: I got there in April and I was early. The person whom I wareplacing was not departing until summer.

Q: This is April 1990?

USREY: Yes, April 1990. So, I had sort of an informal bridge assignment until the summer, when I was actually paneled into a position in the summer of 1990 in OES in Washington.

Q: How long were you there?

USREY: In OES?

Q: Yes.

USREY: Two years.

Q: What was your job in OES?

USREY: I was the deputy director of OES/ENV, which was the Environmental Protection Office. I became the department expert in an arcane subject, which was the Montreal

protocol. This is the ozone treaty that regulates substances that deplete the ozone layer. I enjoyed that. I did a lot of traveling. I got into some issues that I had never been involved with before. I learned a lot.

Q: What were the issues involving the State Department concerninthe ozone?

USREY: It's a good question. The State Department always retained the right to take the lead when international negotiations were involved. All the expertise was somewhere else. Nobody in State knows much about global climate change. I did end up learning a lot, but that was not our career expertise. That led to uncomfortable tension we had with EPA or NOAA or the Department of Energy. They had the experts who knew the issues. So, I typically would travel to Geneva, for example, as head of a delegation of people who knew a lot more than me. It was a tricky balancing act to keep good relations among the team. Of course, these weren't the Panama Canal negotiations. We had pretty limited talking points. I wasn't cutting big swaths of policy, but it was tricky keeping everybody clear that the State Department had to lead. Our view was always that we couldn't let technical experts lead a negotiation. It happens to this day. If someone goes to a Kyoto meeting, if we have an interagency team, someone like an Undersecretary for Global Affairs, would head that. There wouldn't be a vacancy.

Q: Well, in dealing with other powers, did you find that, in a way, our situation was replicated? In other words, they would have, maybe a Foreign Ministry type, or something like that, at the head of the delegation? Those experts were the ones who were going to end up talking the details?

USREY: Yes, we were slightly unique. There were a few countries, maybe the UK, maybe the Germans, or the Dutch would have a Foreign Ministry expert, but they wouldn't insist that they do all the talking. So, I always found that the hardest negotiation was before we left Washington. State would call a meeting. The procedure was interesting. Say it was an important meeting, and we were going to propose that the U.S. agree to end the use of

CFCs or Freon, in auto air conditioners. It obviously would have a big impact on industry. It was an economic fix. We thus had preliminary meetings with industry. Industry groups would come in, and NGOs would be there too, like Friends of the Earth. All the relevant NGOs would come in, and then we would have to what is called Circular 175 authority. This is something you would do when you finally get consensus among all relevant groups. This could take months. It was very labor-intensive. We would consult with OMB, or the White House, the CEQ, Council on Environmental Quality, part of the White House. These meetings could have 30, 40 people from different agencies. NASA was sometimes involved. DOD might get involved because it might impact defense installations and stuff. It was very protracted. We would finally get elaborate instructions, what we were allowed to commit to or not, in these meetings. Then, we would go off and try to craft how to proceed and what our tactics would be. But, the hardest work was leaving Washington. Once you actually got to the negotiation, it was relatively easy. But, I worked on the ozone. It wasn't the only thing though. The U.S. is party to something called the Economic Commission for Europe, which is a holdover from the European Coal Commission. This is a group which includes Canada and the U.S. We were party to some air quality agreements that were binding. We used our Clean Air Act amendments of 1990 to advance some new U.S. positions and some agreements. It was in Geneva. That's where I went most of the time. But most of my work was done on the ozone, the Montreal Protocol.

Q: Where were we standing? This is still the Bush administration. Compared to other countries' representations, were we taking a pretty conservative stand?

USREY: Especially on global climate change. Luckily, that was something I was not directly involved in. That was a separate office called the Office of Global Change, or something. The administration was opposed to anything that would hurt industry, economic output. Even then, before the Kyoto Agreement, some of the more liberal Europeans, the Swedes and others, were pushing for binding targets and timetables, reducing carbon emissions. There was a huge interagency effort with expertise from all over the U.S. government and all the academies and stuff. We were very unpopular. It was

shown in Rio. There was a big conference in Rio in 1992, the Rio summit. On my issues, it was less problematic because were party to Montreal protocol. We were doing pretty well. The U.S. was doing pretty well in controlling substances that did deplete the ozone layer. It seemed to be a pretty effective treaty. I do recall in negotiations, some Europeans were suspected by us of pushing for unrealistic targets, knowing that the U.S. and Canada, and some of the others, maybe the UK, couldn't agree to them. It made them look good, but they knew it would never become effective. We were sort of forced into being the bad guy. We would not agree to something we couldn't do.

Q: Did you find there was a problem with keeping your panel of experts in line, in that they were more interested in having tougher standards and all? There must have been some leaders whose work was only on the political side, including the industrial side, who said, “This won't work,” or something.

USREY: Well, yes. Not all agencies had the same positions, or constituencies, of course, so we would often meet with OMB or NSC reps who would ensure that things stayed on track. Of course, the State Department wasn't going to go any further than the White House wanted us to go. This phenomenon was manifested, most awkwardly, at a meeting of OECD in Paris once. There was this huge table. Most delegations had one, two, maybe three people. Everybody had a little name tag. But we had around 18 people, a big gaggle, sitting behind the U.S. card. What that meant was no one trusted the other agencies. So, each agency felt it had to go. You'd see this huge uncoordinated group comprising the U.S. delegation. They were all jockeying, trying to find out what was happening, and what they could do to influence the outcome. So, it was a very unwieldy thing, because the U.S. government is odd. Each agency has its own clout, funding and Congressional backing, and so on. To be clear, once we actually got our official instructions in Washington, it wasn't like we had renegade or rogue members who would go off and cut separate deals. That wasn't the problem. It was more managing the size of the thing. It was a big, unwieldy affair. When I finally ended my OES assignment, one of the things I least missed was the endless interagency meetings where State really wasn't the expert on the material.

If you're on a geographic desk, and you have to send a cable, you hardly ever need any clearance outside State, except for maybe the NSC. But, to get a position in doing environmental work, you needed 18 different agencies on board. It was Commerce, DOD, and EPA, and NOAA, and God knows what else.

Q: How about the non-governmental organizations dealing with the environment, Green Peace and those institutes? Were they a constant presence?

USREY: Yes, they were a constant presence. They, of course, being NGOs weren't accredited as part of the U.S. delegation, although in big negotiations, they would be accredited on their own. You would have the big ones, and the important ones there, the Sierra Club, who had their own people. I got to tell you, they were a little doctrinaire, because of who they are, but usually they were extremely well informed, and worth listening to. I'm glad we had them, because without that voice, the U.S. delegation might have done some things it shouldn't do. We were always reminded, by these guys, of the other position. It was very useful. Other countries don't do that. Very few countries have that dynamic. It was interesting. I learned a lot.

Q: Well, in the two years you were doing this, what had happened during those two years, as far as your observation of things, your issue?

USREY: Well, two things of significance happened during that assignment: (1) There was a fund that was developed for implementing the Montreal protocol that was to be drawn upon by developing countries to comply with their obligations. In other words, to do something like phase-out CFCs in air conditioners cost a lot of money for a country like Somalia or India, for example. You can't expect these countries without a transfer of funds, to do all this stuff. So, we created a huge fund which involved coordination meetings in Montreal, pretty frequently. I was involved in that. The U.S. was part of the board that managed the fund. That was very significant. What we would do was, evaluate projects that would come in, with a request for funding. We would assign funding based on the

validity or the solidness of the project. Let's say we got something from India, a project to change the way they put air conditioning in office buildings, or something. Say that they wanted 50 million dollars of seed money to pay for that. We would compare that to, say, another proposal in Ecuador or Brazil. So, that was interesting. That was one important thing that we actually put teeth and money into the Montreal Protocol with this global fund. The other thing that was probably important was that Congress passed, and the President signed the Clean Air Act amendment in 1990, which significantly strengthened our rules on that. In fact, Washington, this area, now has the same clean air standards as California. The Clean Air Act amendment dealt with things like gas additives and ground level ozone, and so forth, lead emissions. So, we were able to use that. To a great extent the U.S. was going beyond what the Europeans had done. So, I was able to parlay some of that into some effective diplomacy vis-a-vis U.S. positions. We actually had a law behind it, not just rhetoric. Those were two signal developments that I remember.

Q: Well, still, the long-term effects were important.

USREY: You can look back now, and the Montreal Protocol, for years, has worked. I think we have peaked on global emissions. It's going to take some time for the hole to repair itself. This thing is long term, but we found alternate chemicals to do these things. In fact, they are more fuel efficient, and cheaper in some cases, and a hell of a lot less damaging. This was a real problem that actually led to an effective response. I really learned a lot on how that was done. It was a rewarding assignment.

Q: Would this be 1992?

USREY: It was 1992 when I ended the assignment.

Q: Where did you go then?

USREY: I went to NEA. I was the deputy director for the Office of Regional Affairs, NEA/RA, which did crosscutting stuff. We handled issues like the Arab League boycott of

Israel. We did bureau program planning. We had the office that handled the MFO in the Sinai Peninsula. That was in there. We had our military officer assigned to that office. We worked on chemical, nuclear, all the crosscutting stuff. Peace Process issues, too. So, I was the deputy there. Once the Oslo Accords were signed, which I think was in 1993. Yes. Then, five working groups to support Oslo were set up, and we supported all that stuff out of our office. It was a big and busy office.

Q: You did this from 1992 to when?

USREY: Summer of 1994. That's when I went to Rabat.

Q: Did you feel that you were back in your home port, really?

USREY: Yes, I was familiar with the issues and the countries. That said, a regional affairs office is not quite like a country office. You don't have a specific region or country for which you are responsible. There was considerable interaction with the front office, particularly when the peace process stuff got going. It was fun. I looked at that as a welcome return to (a) getting out of the interagency squabbles that we had all the time, and (b) back in touch with direct policy formulation. Despite what they say about OES and global issues, the seventh floor didn't pay much attention to such issues, and still doesn't. Well, a little more than before, but it's not the fast track.

Q: This Arab boycott of Israel has been going on for 50 years or so. Where did it stand at the time you were looking at it? I would have thought that since things have passed on so much and the communists have gotten... It is sort of like oil, which is fungible. Things just move around.

USREY: I think that's right. I think the Arab League boycott probably was observed more in principle than in practice. What we had was still an active boycott in the early 1990s, which was relatively active. But, with the Oslo Accords, the peace process, we saw that in the White House, and the White House saw it more importantly, as a way to finish this

thing off. So, each country had a score card. We actually got into this ranking business of how countries were doing, and things like the secondary boycott. If you look at the Arab League boycott in detail, it's a very complicated thing. It's enforced in a number of ways, like a contract. For example, let's say, our mission in Egypt, when they signed a contract with a local firm, for some service, it has to have a clause in it that says it is not in any way enforcing the Arab boycott of Israel. This was necessary since the boycott was all over customs documents and all over financial transactions. We were trying to dismantle it and finish it off. Maybe we did, and maybe, I think, more importantly, economic globalization damaged the boycott more than we were able to do.It was a time when other countries weren't interested in the boycott. We were moving toward peace. It was pretty heady days after the Oslo Accords. So, things were looking good in 1993. The boycott was seen as something we could finish off with one good policy push, so we were working on that.

Q: How did the transition between the Bush and the Clintoadministration reflect on NEA, from your observation?

USREY: Pretty bipartisan. I don't recall any violent policy shifts, apart from the change in personnel and so forth. Out came one group, and in came another one. This would have been in 1993. The election was over in 1992.

Q: Yes, 1992, so it would have had to been 1993.

USREY: So, it happened in January or so. So, we had a transition. But, the people that at least came into NEA... You know, Ed Djerejian was replaced by Bob Pelletreau. These were both career people who were not political. Our Middle East policy really didn't changed very widely. Of course, the accords with Rabin and with Arafat happened on Clinton's watch. This was the famous White House ceremony and all that. I guess you saw maybe a little more involvement by the Clinton team than the Bush team.

Q: But, it wasn't a hostile takeover or anything like that?

USREY: No. I can't recall a single policy that was entirely re-cast or totally revised. It may have been seen in other areas, but with the Middle East, we had had the same policy for some time.

Q: Well, okay, we'll pick this up the next time, when you're off tRabat in 1994.

USREY: Summer of 1994.

Q: You're going to be there how long?

USREY: I extend, I got a fourth year.

Q: So, you were there until 1998.

USREY: I came back here.

Q: Okay, well we'll pick that up.

***

Gary, we're off to Rabat. What is your job there?

USREY: I was a DCM in Rabat.

Q: Now, who is the ambassador?

USREY: The ambassador was a guy called Marc Ginsberg, a political appointee, former Washington attorney, who had strong ties to the Clinton-Gore team. He had been there about six months. He went out in the December/January time frame. So, the existing DCM there, Joan Plaisted, was leaving that summer. I got there about six months into...

Q: Joan Plaisted?

USREY: Yes.

Q: I interviewed her.

USREY: Oh. I worked with Joan this past fall when we were both senior advisors in New York at the U.S. Mission to the U.N. After retiring, we went out together, worked together.

Q: Well, now, what was the situation in Morocco when you arrived i1994?

USREY: I got there at the very end of August. I got permission to arrive very late, because my oldest daughter was starting college. I arrived as late in the summer as one can do, 29th of August or something. The most salient thing was the upcoming Casablanca conference. You'll recall, this is one of those annual meetings that got spun out of the Oslo process. The hopes were historically high for Middle East peace. Although, Morocco was nominally the organizer of this, we were deeply involved with the planning cell in the Foreign Ministry, and in the palace there that was being put together, because we had Secretary Christopher coming. Of course, there was going to be the Israelis. That was somewhat historic. I got to meet Foreign Minister Shimon Perez in Casablanca. Arafat and all the Gulf Arabs meeting in a conference with an Israeli delegation was still a new and remarkable thing. I guess it would be remarkable again today, under the circumstances. To have all these guys sit around the table in a non-confrontational way to plot regional economic integration and future Middle East peace. It was very, very exciting. We were very busy in the embassy up until... I guess that was October. I have to tell you, I can't recall. Maybe it was early November, late October when the Casablanca conference happened. So, it seems like I got caught up with preparations for the conference at the same time I was doing my courtesy calls, and getting to know the staff and getting the staff to know me, and who I was. I had to learn French before I went out there. I never dreamed I would go to the French speaking world. I thought I would dodge that bullet. Here, I ended up in Rabat, and having to take French. Moroccans really don't like to speak Arabic much. They prefer to use French, at least the elite.

Anyway, the first few months were totally consumed with that. I remember “wheels up” with Christopher, after the conference was over. We drove down to Casablanca Airport and put him on his plane. I think everyone thought it really went well. It was a pretty successful conference.

Q: Here you are an Arabist. Did you get any feel for our team morale, Christopher, dealing with the problem at that time, the Arab-Israeli situation? It has been criticized, at least at a later time, as the Arabists were essentially excluded. Did you get any feel for that?

USREY: If you are referring to the SMEC/NEA rivalry or divide, I always viewed that as more an organizational problem, as much as it was philosophical. I mean that you shouldn't have... Bob Pelletreau, who is about as classic an Arabist guy as you can have. It was still Ed Djerejian when I was in Washington, but shortly thereafter, it was Bob. Both of those guys would have been classic career Arabists of the first order. You couldn't lay blame at the NEA Bureau for lack of any focus on the Arab-Israeli issue. I always thought that the SMEC issue, having Dennis Ross and Aaron Miller do that, working on the same issues out of the Secretary's office, sometimes without good coordination and in relative isolation..

Q: You're talking about SMEC?

USREY: It was an acronym - Special Middle East Coordinator. So, it was SMEC Ross and DSMEC Miller. It's stupid. “Man from SMEC” sounds like it's from Get Smart or something. But I guess from my perspective in Rabat, I didn't have the sensation anymore Middle East policy had suddenly been hijacked by non-career types. Middle East policy was often formulated at the White House, anyway.

Q: That was the adversary you were getting from...

USREY: That is not the best perch from which to make an assessment of the Middle East. Rabat is on the rim of the Arab world. It's the closest Arab country to the U.S., and all

that. Certainly, we felt we were involved at post. So, I think hopes were very, very high for peace at that time. Then, of course, we had the subsequent Amman conference the next year. Then, I guess it was Qatar, the year after that. Then, I think after that, they stopped occurring. But, I had to sort of decide what my role was going to be. That was obviously decided first by the ambassador. There are some DCMs where the ambassadors are less interested in foreign affairs, if they're political, and the strategic stuff. So those ambassadors pretty much handle the in-house ambassador functions, leaving it up to the DCM to do a large piece of the policy, the “outside” work. Others are all outside, and the DCM is the “inside,” management guy. That latter thing is what I was asked to do. But, I did on our little floor there. Marc and I worked very collegially, especially at first. But, I understood what he wanted me to do was to concentrate more on issues like the MPP and mission morale.

Q: The MPP?

USREY: The Mission Program Planning function, which was an annual thing. You didn't have to live with that, I don't think, but it's a management by objectives exercise that is a nightmare. It makes the EER evaluation process look tame. Anyway, I tried to focus on morale, and of course, keeping tabs on all the Embassy sections. I was heavily involved in political and economic issues. I edited their cables, not overbearingly, I hope. I wasn't hands-off. But, the palace and high-level diplomacy was pretty much Marc's domain. Some DCMs try to become super political counselors, but I tried not to do that. I let the political section do its work. I would take care of managing that. Once we got the Casablanca conference out of way, we had this ongoing, ever present issue of the Western Sahara, which is the last colonial territory dispute left in Africa. The last piece of African territory that is not decided, in terms of sovereignty.

Q: Political sovereignty?

USREY: Right. Franco died in 1975. Then, Spain departed from what was then called Spanish Sahara, leaving a vacuum. It was later turned over to a UN peacekeeping mandate, called MINURSO, a French acronym. MINURSO was a UN peacekeeping mandate. The Moroccans ended up fighting a proxy war against the Polisario. Polisario was the Algerian-backed force, with some Soviet support. It was all a Cold War thing. The U.S. had an interest in solving the dispute, not only because U.S. troops were in the peacekeeping force there, but also because, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, we wanted to see UN resolutions on the Western Sahara carried out.

Q: Were there American troops there?

USREY: We did. We had American troops there. In fact, at one point, an American was the head of the military force. The overall coordinator was some other nationality, but the head of the military unit, was an American colonel. The U.S. had to walk a fine line. We did not endorse or recognize either country's claim on the territory. If you look at a map in the Foreign Ministry in Rabat, you would see references to “Greater Morocco.” Morocco would be shown as extending all the way to Mauritania. We didn't recognize that, because as a UN Council member, we considered it a disputed territory. It was an issue of some conflict with the Moroccans. We had high-level meetings. I was involved in several meetings, with the Ambassador and the King, where I was the note-taker. I think we were making progress on, if not resolving, at least understanding better Morocco's compulsions. What I was going to say was I got pretty much fogged in. That was the main issue we worked on, a bi-lateral issue with the Moroccans, if you can call it that. The other thing was, our ambassador was determined to right-size the Mission. We had a Mission that was, like Tunis and some others, following the Cold War, much bigger than it needed to be. It had this artificial size that reflected our interest in trying to get aid to moderate regimes, to counteract the Soviet influence. Now, all that disappeared, and we didn't need to be in there, in such numbers. Certainly, not in Morocco. This wasn't Egypt or Israel in a front-line situation.

We had a funny situation. About 10 U.S. agencies were represented at the post. Some of the agencies were making decisions on right sizing, downsizing in Washington, for example, USIA. USIA wouldn't necessarily consult with us. We had something like nine, full-time, direct hire Americans in USIA. Within a year and a half, that fell to four. AID had a huge mission there, 20 plus direct hire AID people. That fell even more steeply, by the time I left, it was six. They were debating the future of the AID mission, whether they were ready to “graduate” Morocco, because of its per capita GNP numbers, and all that. With that said, other elements in the mission had less direction from Washington. We had a military defense attache, and we had a military liaison office. You know, the assistance guys. We had very few FSNs. They were delivering surplus U.S. military equipment under the so-called Southern Region Amendment to Moroccans. What else? We didn't really control Peace Corps. They were large, 140 volunteers all over the country, doing really good work. Our job was to try to right size the administrative section, and the ambassador had a bugaboo about merging the economic and political sections. He had seen that done at other posts, or had heard about it. He was fascinated with the concept. While I agreed that we needed to have some symmetry in the right sizing, the downsizing. In other words, we couldn't reduce AID and USIA, and leave the military grossly swollen. I wanted to have a “no regrets” policy, not cut four or five people, and then have a new ambassador come in two years and say, “I don't like it that way.” We wanted to have something that would be defensible and sustainable. I remained, until the time I left, opposed to physically merging the political and economic sections. I thought the single, one thing we should be doing more of with Morocco was trade and bilateral economics, since we were graduating them from AID over time. We should be boosting trade and we needed a full, stand alone, robust economic section.

Q: Had you any experience or had you heard about this merging? It all sounds like a good idea, merging political and economic, but I can see where one or the other can end up dominate. I would suspect that political would end up more dominate than the economic,

which has its own trap. I don't know. Were you getting any feedback at this time about this?

USREY: Well, obviously, the first post, which had done it, was the example the ambassador had in mind. It was done in Cairo, of all places. I think the feeling there was decisions in economic policy were fundamentally political too, and vice versa. Everything had economic consequences, politically. I think more often than not, it was done at posts that had moved from the very large size, say as Cairo, to something like Amman or Yemen, where you probably couldn't justify it, so they couldn't staff it. Sometimes you had counselor jobs where it got harder and harder to attract FSOs to be a section chief. People wanted to be a DCM. It used to be that you had very senior people, in the old days, assigned in embassies as political and economic counselors. But once our personnel policy shifted to the up-or-out approach, people wanted to be DCMs fast. They didn't want to go overseas and be seen sitting for three years in a counselor slot. So consolidation of sections might have been a response to the fact that economic chief or political chief slots were hard to fill. It would be easier to attract good bidders for a “super counselor” job.

I think he wanted to be seen as taking active measures to right size. Gore had been talking about that in the federal government, so he wanted to do that at his level. That's fine. There were cases in which I agreed that we were way too big. It had implications down at our consulate in Casablanca. We no longer had a consulate in Tangier. Our administrative section was also too big. We actually had full-time FSN employees with specialized titles like “iron worker.” I used to have long conversations with the admin. consular who was very good. We agreed we could contract that stuff out. We didn't need a full time iron worker or a cabinet maker, who was paid by the U.S. government. There were some catching-up things we had to do. But you had to be careful, because you could trigger negative moral implications. We could end up losing our good and necessary FSNs if our downsizing wasn't clearly explained and transparent. My goal was going at a pace that was justified and explainable to everybody. So, all through the three and a half year term of Ambassador Ginsberg there, we were working on right sizing the mission. I think we

mostly got it right. He let me have a very large say in that. I think the decisions we took were largely correct. I don't think we made any serious mistakes. But, it takes time. If you want to downsize your attaches, for example, you have to deal with the parent agencies, like DIA, who want to protect their equities.

What we finally decided to do was to have our two military offices be physically separate, as they were, but report to a single colonel who had responsibility for both. That would unify and make their jobs more coherent. That is how we did that. Admin. dropped a lot. As I say, the military went down. We did this in a tandem with the other agencies, like AID and USIA. I think when I left, it was about the right size.

Q: Going back to the- (end of tape)

Going back to the Spanish Sahara, the whole Sahara thing. What were the Moroccans after and what was the other side after? What was our role?

USREY: A good question. The terms of the UN resolutions on this call for a referendum that was to be organized so that the true residents of the Western Sahara could vote on their future, whether they wanted to be affiliated with Morocco, or independent. So, there were UN resolutions on this. The trick, however, was always in the details. You had to determine, for example, who true “Sahrawis” were. There was a series of criteria that had been established by the UN, for example, having been born there, having been the son or daughter of a Sahrawi who was born there. I don't remember them all, frankly. I think there were five criteria where one could qualify to be eligible to vote in a referendum. Morocco controlled virtually all of the territory. After the various wars and skirmishes, they had built a long berm, and with their superior force had control of most of the territory. This did not have a lot of resources, except it did have phosphates, which is a key ingredient in fertilizer. You can see the huge shoreline there, which is rich in anchovies and tuna, which the Japanese, the Spaniards, and others wanted to exploit. So there were some economic resources involved. But, the Moroccan government had taken the position of

no compromise. The King was responsible for this. Hassan had led the so-called Green March to the region to whip up national support for his view that Moroccan sovereignty was historic. There was a great folklore surrounding the Moroccan sovereignty over it, some of which was legitimate, but some of it was rather tenuous. Our concern was that the UN resolutions be adhered to.

The question, of course, in everybody's mind, was if a real referendum were held, and Morocco lost, what would they do. Very few observers believed that Morocco, in that case, would say, “Okay, we lost, here is the territory.” There were two ways in which the Moroccan government could seek to forestall or avoid such a cataclysmic outcome. One would be to stall, because you can't have a referendum if both sides don't participate, or two, you could stack the polls. You could register many more people who might not have been real Sahrawis who would be induced to vote in favor of Morocco. When we were there, the UN had an identification commission, headed by a guy called Eric Jensen, who was headquartered at Laayoune, in the Western Sahara. They were trying to use the local tribes and the nomads, trying to agree on, by looking at documentation, who would qualify to vote in this referendum, the date of which had never been set. It still hasn't been set. There were charges of malfeasance by each side. I won't say who was right. The Algerians were charging that the Moroccans were stuffing the rolls of computer disks with thousands of names on it, many of whom had tenuous ties to the Western Sahara, who were pro-Moroccan, who would vote for affiliation with Morocco.

There would be, occasionally, a military conflict, where there was a hit and run thing over the Berm, and skirmishes. Toward the end of my tour, these had almost gone away, so there was no real threat of an open war. But, there is always the fear that a force from Algeria, or the Polisario could punch through the line, and start a real problem, a real shooting war down there. That is what we all wanted to avoid. To this day, they have enlisted former Secretary of State James Baker as the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General on the Western Sahara. He is trying to organize this thing. We were

trying to keep the Moroccans on the reservation, compliant with the resolutions, while ensuring our credibility in New York and the UN. It's a tricky thing.

Q: Were the Algerians thinking they would get a window on thAtlantic, or something?

USREY: You can see that if they did control it, they would have an Atlantic coast, as Morocco does. I think, more fundamentally, with Algeria, they are classic rivals in the Maghreb. They really don't like each other much. The border had been closed after a shooting in Marakesh occurred, just as I was getting there, and some Moroccans were killed. They closed the border up on the northern coast where there was a big tourism hotel and a whole service industry that had built up on the Moroccan side. That all went by the wayside. To one degree or another, we always felt we couldn't prove who was at fault in the conflict. It was sort of like Kashmir. You can't really prove the Pakistanis are backing the militants, but it's hard to imagine militants could operate freely in Pakistan without some support. It was probably material support Algeria was providing the Polisario, although less and less, after the Cold War ended.

Q: Well, at one point, the Polisario had the ear of the United States, and England, I guess in Europe. The Mark Band people, and the starlets...

USREY: Sort of like Tibet and the Buddhists.

Q: Tibet and Buddhists, and I think, Biafra, and all that. Had thidied out as a cause?

USREY: No, not entirely. But, it was maybe less a Hollywood type cause than it was one for the international NGOs. When the UN Commission on Human Rights would meet in Geneva, for example, in the spring, the Polisario always managed a very crafty public relations campaign that could point to generally acknowledged transgressions by the Moroccans. That they had not adhered to the resolutions. That they were still trying to win a resolution, a referendum by force, instead of complying by international law, and all that. Frankly, in my opinion, the Moroccans, had a rather clumsy, and turgid diplomatic, public

diplomacy policy on that. “It's ours dammit, and if you don't believe it, look at the history.” They weren't very adroit. It was such a taboo issue that in Morocco, it's an absolute monarchy, effectively.

Of course, there is a parliament, and there were some aspects of a democratic regime, but it's closer to an absolute monarchy than anything else. At least when King Hassan was there, although I can't speak for the current king, Mohammad. There were three or four things that could not be discussed. You had freedom of speech in the press. The Herald Tribune was freely available. The press was pretty open. You had cable TV and all that, or satellite TV. But, you couldn't talk about the monarchy, the current monarchy, or the status of the monarchy in the future. That was understood to be taboo. The military was another thing you couldn't talk about. Islam, in general, because Hassan was not only a direct descendant of the prophet, and a sovereign to his people, he was also commander of the faithful, through his hereditary connections, he claimed. The fourth thing you couldn't speak about was the Western Sahara. You just didn't discuss it, unless it was to reaffirm the Moroccan view in the press. There was no public debate. It was rather clumsy, so they didn't come across, internationally, very smoothly.

Q: Had there been any soundings of the Sahara tribes and all? Dianybody have a feel of what might happen?

USREY: You mean ad hoc polls?

Q: Yes.

USREY: The only way to do it was to have a referendum. You go to a place like Laayoune, which has been swollen by Moroccan investment, and Moroccan workers brought in, and housing built. There have been a lot of resources from a country that doesn't have a lot of extra money, thrown in there, to sort of change the mood and make the Moroccan regime look more favorable to the Sahrawis. It's a very tough place to run an honest Gallup poll. I note the fact that the Moroccans were going to all these lengths, because it suggested

that they knew that it was very, very close. So, it was a problem. The Moroccans got themselves into this referendum game by agreeing to comply with the terms of the UNSCRs, but they didn't like the risks. The risks were dangerous. It might be dangerous to the regime.

Q: Well, what was down there?

USREY: How did we get there? I guess I went to Agadir on a Royal Morocco flight, and then got into an UN aircraft there. You flew in on a UN plane, and it was a UN-administered city, but heavy presence of Moroccan officials there. You could see the old Spanish paradors from colonial days. For a couple years, DCMs of most western embassies did not go down there. We were careful to only send working level, i.e., political officer and sometimes political counselor level people, to avoid appearing to rubberstamp the Moroccan claim. That was relaxed later largely because of the large number of international travelers down there, and the fact that other embassies almost all dropped it. We were one of the last ones. I went toward the end of my tour. Our ambassador never went, and still hasn't gone, to my knowledge. I don't know if she is interested in going down there.

But, you land there, and it's a funny place. There is this nice airport, all jazzed up, with this monumental sculpture. You get on a little roundabout, and go through some desert. Then, you pass some obviously recently built housing, in little neighborhoods, with street lights and schools and stuff. There is money being spent. There are phosphates mines around. It's some of the best phosphate in the world. Phosphates come from areas that were once under sea. This area was all under water. So, the phosphates were of the highest quality. You would reach down in, and this stuff was gold. It produced high quality fertilizer. It was probably their big export item. There were one or two good restaurants. There were a lot of international peacekeepers and support staff. You saw these Koreans, Sri Lankans, Nepalis, and Nigerians, or whatever. People walking around in their UN berets, and patrolling in jeeps. They had routine overflights of the area, at great UN expense, in

order to monitor whether there had been any violations of the cease-fire line. We kept up pressure in New York to bring Morocco finally to the table, and conduct this referendum, because of the expense. We had to be sensitive to that. We pay 25% or more of these things anyway. It was expensive. These things are very expensive. You have soldiers down there. They draw heavy danger pay, extra pay. So, the UN Security Council kept passing resolutions, giving an increasingly shorter extension of the deadline before the referendum had to happen. This was almost monthly, at one point, as a pressure tactic. We are still not there.

Baker is working hand-in-hand with the Secretary General on his own approach, which I'm not very familiar with, and can't comment on. If I had to bet the mortgage, I would find it hard to imagine... I think the two sides have to want to end this, before there can be a referendum.

Q: Do we have any contact with the Polisario at all?

USREY: Well, our political officer, when I was there, would go down to Tindouf, across the Berm, inside Algeria. There is a refugee camp there. At Tindouf, he would meet with the Polisario leaders. There were several of them. They were sort of a diffuse group, but they had a leader, and an international command council. Some of these guys had been in the desert for 20 years over there. It was surreal. In fact, we were involved in helping to facilitate a repatriation of about 200 Moroccan POWs, who had been there for up to 20 years in that camp.

Q: Oh, God.

USREY: They were returned to Marakesh. I was down there on the runway. I was there in Marakesh with the Moroccan UN Perm Rep. in New York. A C130 came out of the sky and landed. Some of our people were on board with the POWs. Some of these guys had trouble walking. It was a tragedy. There is no reason for this. But, until Morocco and Algeria said, “Look, enough already...” And I can't speak to King Mohammad's ability to

address that. The trouble is that it had become hyped up as such a national identification issue that it would be difficult for any compromise to be... Because there hasn't been a debate on it. It's a pandora's box issue. So, they are running scared.

Q: Every time I talk to people, they talk about the berm. What wathat?

USREY: It's a wall of sand about eight feet high. The berm is like a cur, but a big one. It is the Sahara Desert. It is the beginning of the Sahara, with wind storms and intense heat in the summer, and flat, unfeatureless terrain. It is very, very hard to defend against, so the Moroccans built a berm almost 1,000 miles long. It is an unbelievable construction feat. It took earth movers, and hand tools. It took years to build, after the Green March, I think. It doesn't run along the border exactly, but it parallels it somewhat. It is a long barrier, 1,000 kilometers.

Q: I would think that having lived for two and a half years in Dhaharan and watching what sand does, we have walls around the compound which immediately got buried.

USREY: So, there had to be a lot of maintenance, and the fear was that a group of Polisario would come over the Berm near Laayoune and start something. Then, there would be a real situation. So, the good news is that the U.S. was no longer involved in a Cold War sort of relationship with Morocco. The Soviet Union ceased to exist, and Algeria was no longer a client state of the Soviet Union, but they still hated each other. I wish I had followed it more closely. My guess is relations are a good deal better between the two countries. It seemed like a big deal to us. In the grander scheme of things, I don't think the seventh floor of the State Department thought much about the Western Sahara. But, when you have Security Council resolutions and American peacekeepers involved, the stakes are reasonably high.

Q: Well, how did we see King Hassan? This is close to the end ohis time.

USREY: Yes, he died a year after I left.

Q: Was he in ill health when you were there?

USREY: Yes, he was. There were always rumors about Hassan's health, and his fairly regular trips to the U.S. I guess sometimes he went without seeing the president, but normally it was on the margins of a working visit. He would go to New York. There were physicians in the U.S. who went. They were heart physicians. He was a heavy smoker. He was a small man in stature. Hassan was tiny, and was very slight. He was about 5'4" or 5'5". He couldn't weigh 100 pounds. He had almost a female stature of bone thinness, but a commanding, magnetic presence.

Remember when his father, Mohammad V, who was a national war hero, against French colonialism. When he died and Hassan became king, he was seen as a scotch drinking, golf playing playboy. But, as Hassan matured, well before the Middle East peace process, there were meetings in Morocco that the king arranged between Israel and Arabs that probably sowed the seeds for Madrid and Oslo. So, he had real stature. He was a moderate Muslim. He was clear about violence. He was clearer than most leaders in that region. He didn't put up with any nonsense with extremist Islamists, and so on. He had great personal stature. He was a favorite to the French presidents. He even kept Queen Elizabeth waiting once, which is a never to be forgotten incident, between the British and the Moroccans. He kept her waiting an hour or something, which was unbelievable. He had known every president since Eisenhower, if not before, fairly well. So, when he made his state visit to the U.S. when I was there, which was a major, major thing, done up all the way, he cultivated international favor. He was pro-western, pro-business. We liked him. He was a fascinating man.

Q: Was there concern when you went out there, by people who dealt with Morocco, from Washington? We had ambassadors and whole embassies who had been almost captured by the Moroccans. There is talk about one of our ambassadors who, when he would refer

to “we,” he meant the Moroccans. “Our King,” that sort of thing. Was Ginsberg aware of this, and careful about this?

USREY: Yes, he was aware of it, and he took, maybe excessive pains, to go the other way. Marc was determined to have a correct relationship with Moroccans in that respect. He was a Jewish ambassador. He was one of the first Jewish ambassadors in an Arab country. It was quite a novelty, although Morocco has and always had a significant Jewish population. Andre Azoulay, one of the King's top advisors, was a Jewish Moroccan, so it wasn't a totally strange thing, but it was a bit unusual. He was also young. He was a year or two younger than I was. I was 45 when I got there, so he was a young ambassador in a highly visible part of the Middle East. He was determined to make sure he represented the U.S. interest and not the other way around. He had been aware of all the stories. Sometimes he was hard on the Moroccans, in my opinion, in that way, possibly to guard against that.

Q: Were we pushing at all for democrization?

USREY: We were. We had limited tools, of course, because we didn't have military aid at the time. We weren't going to tie up our AID program to a relatively minor place. This was not an Egypt, or a Turkey, after all. Morocco's protection of human rights was spotty, but it was not terrible. We took enormous pains to get the human rights report right. The process is one with which you're familiar, I'm sure. You send back a report that you have edited several times and it gets attacked by a group of contractors, and DRL, and gets torn apart. It is a real difficult process, always done at the eleventh hour. The report came out in September, and the day after, we started on next year's report. Our political section did a very good job, and the front office reviewed it carefully, but we pulled no punches in the report. We also had some projects with NED. They did a few things with the parliament. The parliament, believe it or not, did not have a directory of his members. There wasn't a congressional directory. It didn't exist. We helped finance such a directory in Arabic, so people in Morocco could see who his or her representative was, what the District was;

his phone number, her phone number. It was an unremarkable thing, but it had not been done. With small projects we used our international visitor program, the IV program, to bring... Democracy was always a fundamental focus on that, to bring people back, to look at Americans, a civil society, and how NGOs played a role. Morocco had lots of NGOs. It wasn't that they didn't exist, but they were very loosely coordinated. With the stand alone issues, they didn't seem to have a good, connective tissue.To the extent there were problems, they tended to be in the following areas: Let's see if I can remember. One was in press freedoms, foolish. I think Le Monde, the French paper, once printed an unflattering article on King Hassan. It did not like King Hassan. It took a harsh perspective on him, and his government. The government then seized all issues of Le Monde for four or five days. You can read this stuff on the Internet or hear it on TV. That was silly. It was that kind of occasional censorship, the incommunicado detention - the fact that they didn't always follow due process. People weren't hung necessarily from their thumbs. The Moroccans were sloppy about habeas corpus, and all that sort of stuff. Those are the two areas that come to mind. It was sort of a lack of due process. It wasn't bad. It was a country that had signed a partnership agreement with the EU. Ten years after the agreement entered into force, they would effectively have a free trade agreement with all of the EU. It makes it almost a EU country. Israel and Tunisia have similar agreements. Maybe Turkey is trying to get one now. It was a fairly advanced place. There was no particular need for their small blemishes.

Q: What was the role of the French there?

USREY: The French saw this as their “chasse priv#,” their private patch. They had the largest French school there outside metropolitan France. It was in Morocco. They had a tricky relationship. The Moroccans were never a colony, they were a protectorate for 16 years. They were never like Algeria. Algeria was metropolitan France. It was French territory. That's part of the friction between the two countries, the superiority feeling that Morocco exhibited. With that said, most of the elite spoke and learned their French, studied in France, had French wives. The French put a lot of resources into it.

So did the Spanish, by the way. If you think about it, it really is one of the more important relationships over time, I think. But, the French had a huge mission there. We had a cordial, but competitive relationship with the French embassy. They had a nice DCM, and I got along well with the ambassador. We were competing for the same economic opportunities, such as whether Morocco was going to buy Aerobus, or a Boeing. Of course, RAM was all Boeing. One of the assassination attempts against Hassan was when he was aboard one of those 707s. They took some rounds through an engine and the plane kept flying. He said, “Well, I'll always buy Boeing,” because the plane got him down. But, there was some competition there, we knew whatever we did would be carefully scrutinized by the French, and viewed as aimed against them, which of course it wasn't. We always felt that with Morocco, the future, with the Internet in English... In fact, the younger Moroccans were going to Penn State, Texas, Florida to study. So, the old French ties were weakening.

Q: Well, was there concern on our part about the economic side, about the French paying off, particularly into Mitterrand and all that. There were French ambassadors or people from Paris coming around with satchels full of money to get things.

USREY: Yes, there was a concern. We were keenly aware that many of our big competitors do not have a foreign corrupt practice act like we do. Without naming names, a lot of the big infrastructure stuff, like a new port in Tangier and radar system for the Straits of Gibraltar, they were going to effectively put a big traffic control system for the heavy ship traffic getting in and out of there. These were big contracts. We knew we were up against some competitors that didn't have the same ethical regulations we had. It was a constant concern, and we had to fight for every penny. I'll give Ambassador Ginsberg credit on one thing. He set up a joint commission with Morocco on trade with subcommittees in areas where we either had disputes or had difficulties. They had a great commerce minister, a guy called Dris Jetu, who is now I think the Interior minister. We had regular meetings at ambassadorial and ministerial level with committees and reports. It was a novel idea that got us around some tricky things, like 200% duty on alkaline battery

imports. There was not a national product that was competing with it, but yet they had these absurd duties. We got some of that stuff solved.

The ambassador also dreamed up something called “Bridges to Progress.” I think the name was a little goofy, but it was effectively a reverse trade mission. This was led by him to survey the Moroccan market to see what was hot, food processing, telecom, graphic arts, whatever it is. Then, we could figure out where in the U.S. these industries were located, and then he would take a team of 10 or 12 of the top Moroccan industrialists in that field. He would take them to St. Louis, Atlanta, or Chicago, and literally match them up with American businessmen. It was quite remarkable. We did a couple of those. So, I learned a lot, on the trade promotion side. It was almost a zero sum game, given the small, not terribly fast growing size to the Moroccan economy, that if we were going to win a deal, it would have to come from somewhere else. Of course, the Spanish were there too, and the Italians. It was a crowded field to compete in.

Q: Was Morocco attracted to the EU?

USREY: Morocco was attracted for status reasons and also I think the King knew, and even his son even better, that Morocco's economic future was linked to Europe. He did his master's thesis on Morocco's relations with the European Union, or something like that. They knew that Morocco's future lay with some sort of partnership where by attaching itself to European globalization and economic policies, Morocco would be dragged kicking and screaming into the late 20th century, where it needed to be. Left to its own devices, Morocco would take much longer to get there. With that said, I'm not sure the Moroccans understood the full impact of that approach. They kept calling for a “free trade agreement” with the U.S. What that effectively means is that U.S. goods would come in unimpeded by duty. We would swamp them. They always said they wanted a free trade agreement. It was a two-way street. Their carpets, and their textiles, and handicrafts would not have any duty assessed in the U.S., but our stuff would come in the other way, cars, computers. I don't think they ever fully gripped the implications of it. I think the pain is still down the

line with EU when this partnership kicks in. I talked with a Moroccan businessman once, and asked him how he saw this shaking out. He said, “You look at all the companies now operating in Morocco and in 10 years, one-third will be gone, one-third will be fundamentally restructured, and one-third will be fine. That was very impressionistic, but right. In other words, it would be a transformation of this protected economy, to something competitive. But, it would be rough. There would be displacement.

Q: What about Islam? How did it play there during your time?

USREY: It played prominently, surprisingly, because given Morocco's moderate politics and nearness to Europe and the U.S., you wouldn't expect it. You would think that Morocco would be far from the more strident religious fervor of the Levant. I always looked at Ramadan. You almost didn't notice in Iraq when Ramadan was happening. It was a secular country, and it was observed, sort of like a cultural custom, but it wasn't exploited by the government then. Egypt a bit more. By the time I got to Egypt, Sadat, and the others were more visible, in endorsing Islam. Moroccans put up a big show of complying with the fast. They had these huge “ftours.” That's how you say “iftar” in Morocco. At night, we got invited. They were very generous like that. We would go and have huge meals all night long. You know how that goes. The King would lead a series of evening prayers. Because at Hassan's role, Islam and its symbols were always present as part of the government's image.

As head of state, he had more than just governmental duties, he had religious duties. Hassan would invite notable Muslims to Morocco during Ramadan. Mohammad Ali came to lead one of these prayer sessions. They had scholars from Al-Azhar and other Islamic scholars from around the world, giving sermons, speeches and addresses. Almost everyone fasted. It was really visible. I don't know how much of that was just a wave of conformity or just a Moroccan fad, or whether it was always different that way. I think the king took seriously his Commander of the Faithful title. I think it was different in Morocco. It was very overtly religious, although quite moderate politically.

Q: But, there was no reflection of the violence that was happeninin Algeria?

USREY: No, nothing like the horrific beheadings and that savagery. They were very careful about incipient movements. There was one Islamist, Sheikh Yaseen, who had been under house arrest for several years. He's since been freed, I'm told. But, he was under house arrest, ostensibly for his “own protection,” in Sale, which is the sister city right across the river. He was a bit of a rebel rouser. I think the police and the interior ministry types kept very close tabs on them. Yes, there were some Islamist groups, but they were on a really short leash. You could have a demonstration about virtually anything in Morocco, but with lots of police. Nothing ever got out of control. It was carefully calibrated. But, one didn't get the feeling that they were repressing a ground swell of radical Islamism like you saw in Algeria, with all the attendant violence. But, there was none of that in Morocco.

Q: Well, is there anything else we should touch before we leavMorocco?

USREY: No.

Q: Well, then in 1998, you left Morocco, and wither?

USREY: I came back to the State Department to become country director for India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. I had met Rick Inderfurth in Morocco, who later became Assistant Secretary for South Asia. He was at the time the ambassador for special political affairs at the UN who helped arrange the prisoner release I referred to.

Q: I interviewed him and he was very pleased with the fact that hgot these poor people...

USREY: It was a great achievement. He is now a professor at GW, I see. He should write a book about that one day. Rick did a good job and worked hard and tirelessly. I had bid on the job as a “filler” bid. You know how you have to have certain regions represented on your bid list? I had no experience in India. He picked up the phone on a Friday and

called me. I hadn't yet gotten my other jobs, and no offer of a mission, or anything like that. Rick said, “Do you want to be our country director of India?” I said, “Okay.” The bureau called me on Monday to say I had been paneled or something, so it was done. I hadn't even flown over South Asia. About two months before I was supposed to leave Morocco, India and Pakistan detonated nuclear tests, triggering Glenn sanctions on both countries. All hell broke loose. It was the single most important issue, from them on, in the Clinton II period between the U.S. and those two countries. The sanctions went on. We already had Pressler and Simonton sanctions on Pakistan. This was added on top, so we had almost nothing we could do with the Pakistanis. Of course, all of that got lifted here a short while ago.

With India, it was a real shame because India was, by far, the most important country in my portfolio. Ninety percent of what I did was India. Here is a country that aspires to UN Security Council permanent member status. We always had this unfortunate... As Dennis Kux writes, Estranged Democracies, which was the title of his first book. They were the two oldest and biggest democracies in the world, but on the wrong side of the Cold war divide. They were in line with the Soviets. They were our nemesis. They drove us crazy at the UN. Finally, the Cold War ended. The “NAM” declined in importance with the demise of the Soviets. Then, Rajiv Gandhi began to open the Indian economy in the early 1990s. It had been a very closed, protected economy. Suddenly, India's economy began to grow, and they adopted open, free market policies. So, we really had a burgeoning... Clinton was fascinated with India, and planned to visit there. Then, the nuclear test happened. It came right in the middle of a high administration priority to greatly enhance relations with India.

So, Strobe Talbot was asked by the president to - He knew him at Oxford - to conduct a high level, strategic dialogue with India and Pakistan, on roughly parallel terms. We had four or five benchmarks that we would try to make progress against in the relationship. They were heavily nuclear. One was to get them to sign the CTBT, which would halt nuclear testing. The second was to cease production of fissile material, plutonium and enriched uranium. Another was to restrain missile testing. No more testing of the delivery

systems for the nuclear weapons that they now obviously had. One was called “strategic restraint” which was, “Don't have exercises while on the Pakistani border. If you're going to do something, use the red phone. Tell the Pakistanis that you are about to move, so they don't misinterpret it and send one up.” There are only a few minutes of missile flight time between Delhi and Islamabad. The other thing was export controls. Since both countries now clearly possessed nuclear weapons, we want to make sure they put into place, statutorily, controls like we have, export controls that make it hard for somebody to export this stuff. Finally, the last thing was on Indo-Pak relations, to improve them. So, those were the benchmarks. Strobe had, an almost impossible task. We made a little more progress in the beginning with the Pakistanis, then we did with the Indians, but then there was the coup in Pakistan, overthrowing Nawaz Sharif. General Musharraf came to power, so we stopped dialoging with Pakistan. We continued with India, and made some more progress. We got a written commitment that said they wouldn't test before the CTBT came into force, which was significant. Of course, the Clinton administration sent up a hastily prepared CTBT ratification package to the Senate. They refused to approve it. We did not ratify the CTBT. We signed it but hadn't ratified it, so the Indians took this as a lack of U.S. commitment. So, that did not help our position.

Then, the administration changed. My entire time in the Clinton administration was taken up with managing sanctions. We tried unsuccessfully to make progress on the benchmarks that would justify lifting some of the sanctions. That was frustrating. It was very frustrating for our ambassador in Delhi, Richard Celeste. He was a former two-term governor of Ohio. He had gotten there at the best of times. Things were in a big upswing, and then wham. He got there ready to plan the president's visit, and ended up managing sanctions. It was sort of discouraging. In Kashmir, every week there would be some event, some incursion that involved eight casualties up there. Majadaheen would kill a dozen Indian policemen or soldiers or something. It was quite negative at first. Of course, when Clinton finally decided in March 2000 to go, he went to India, and Prime Minister Vajpayee

came to Washington later that year. So, things were put on a much higher plane. At the very end, we had a sharp uptick. That's when I left.

Q: How did you find the Indian embassy? I've talked with other people who say the Indian embassy has never been a very effective embassy.

USREY: I think, ironically, that is probably true. That's not normally the case for a democracy, knowing, as it should, the importance of dealing with the Hill and Congress. They didn't do a very effective job. That was changing recently, partly because of demographic changes. We now have a million or more Indian Americans in the U.S. Everywhere you drive there is an Indian restaurant. They are evenly distributed. They are not in Chinatown or Little Italy.

Q: And you got to motels, and there is...

USREY: The Patel motel.

Q: The Patel motel.

USREY: I've heard it said, but I can't prove it. It sounds true. That the Indian-American community is the most affluent ethnic group in the U.S., immigrant/ethnic group, because immigrants tend to be surgeons, engineers, IT professionals, and that sort of thing. So, the low caste people don't immigrate as a rule. These are qualified people coming in. So, what they have done is, by coming with good credentials, disposable income and spread all over the country, they have very strong Hill influence, not limited to one or two districts. So, we now have in the Congress, in the House, something called the India Caucus, the exact size of which is a little indeterminate. I had a list of at least 140 House members which beats the next largest caucus by more than 100. I think the U.S.-Germany caucus had 35. It has immense clout. In some ways, the U.S.-India relationship is beginning to look like the U.S.-Israel relationship, in that the Hill component is extremely component. That's good. Within rules of the game, that's good. So, I think the Indian embassy now,

they have our dynamic ambassador now, Lalit Mansingh. It hasn't always been the case, and the embassy always understood, I don't think, the importance of using that angle. I think relations have sort of been awkward. I think it helps to have the good relations we now have with the Indians. I guess I would say that is changing in the embassy.

Q: I've seen it pointed out, but almost in a corner, where they say, “We get fascinated with China, and its economic potential.” Here is India, who for a while had barriers up, which were stopping it, but here are extremely talented people in a democracy, who can whip out computer stuff...

USREY: Space program.

Q: Space program, anything you can think of.

USREY: Nuclear weapons.

Q: Yes.

USREY: Exactly. I think you are quite right on that Stu. I have always felt that the missing component and the thing that will really kick the U.S.-India relationship into the stratosphere is a strong economic component. When we blew up the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, why didn't that lead to war, or the shoot down of the spy plane? Because the economic consequences are too damn important. With a trading partner that fundamentally important to the health of the U.S. economy, you don't do that. We're not there with India. Not that we are going to have a war with India, but the relationship is missing that dimension. Our trade relationship is dwarfed by U.S.-Chinese relationship. That is beginning to change. If you look at the last ten years of World Bank data, their GDP growth rate, India's growth rate has been the highest average rate over that period. They average around six percent, which is insane. It is very strong. So, if that was the rate, it doesn't take but about 10, 12 years where you double your per capita income. You can work the math. It isn't hard to do. They keep talking about a middle class of four or five

hundred million people. Once India has a consumer class of that size, instead of buying bicycles or transistor radios, will buy computers, washing machines, and American cars, look out. The relationship will on its own enter a whole new phase. That is coming, in my view. Not to mention the increasingly, straight up Indian-American congressional angle.

Q: You arrived there shortly after the Near East Bureau had beesplit. There was a south Asian bureau.

USREY: Yes.

Q: How did that work, or did that leave you off in limbo at the time?

USREY: I was in NEA when that happened. When it actually happened, I might have been in Morocco, but it was being discussed with Congressman Steve Solarz, as its main proponent, who was supposed to be the U.S. ambassador to India, after Tom Pickering. That never happened. I was against it, and I think most NEA career guys were against breaking up the “mother bureau.” You just didn't do that. It was Marakesh to Bangladesh. The fact was that if you sat in any meeting on the sixth floor, in the NEA assistant secretary's office, not much was discussed about South Asia. I really don't think that the assistant secretary thought much about Nepal or Bangladesh. I've come around, and changed my mind. If you look at Afghanistan, which is part of the South Asia bureau, I really think we are not going to go back. I think we are going to see this free standing bureau remain permanently. I just had lunch with a colleague from the bureau, before I came here today. They've added a new Afghan coordination office, a new desk. So, it's going in the other direction, partly for September 11th reasons. But, also I think, as India and Pakistan move up, there is too much going on there. It's almost a billion and a half people, and lots of issues.

Q: While India is coming up, it seems that every once in a while, we had this off and on relationship with Pakistan. What the hell is wrong with Pakistan? It doesn't seem to be able to have a stable government. The history is miserable.

USREY: Just awful. When they had a democracy, they had it. When Benazir Bhutto was prime minister, if you read the Pakistani papers, you would never see anything like that in the Middle East. In much of South America, for that matter. It was real democracy, and real elections. But, then you would have an interruption. The military guy of the day would then step in and cause an interruption there. The reasons for it are complex. One is a profoundly corrupt country, a kleptocracy, if you can use the word, in action, the elites just stealing from an already poor country, even deeper into poverty. Maybe more important, I think the country, after partition from India, was continually defining itself through the prism of Kashmir. Kashmir needs to be solved and these countries need to move on. The fact that everything good that happens to India is seen as bad for Pakistan, and vice versa. It's a goofy way to conduct your foreign affairs. I do believe that after President Bush put it pretty straight to General Musharraf, that either you're with us or without us, and he made his choice, I think we have seen a president make a 180 total policy reverse, flip flop turnaround. Now the question is whether the rest of the regime and the ISI, and the military, and the other parts of the government are able to come with it. He's going to have to bring them along. If you read the paper every day, you see suggestions for that, but they haven't gotten there yet. But, I think Musharraf has completely changed. We never had that in the past. This is new territory here. They are cracking down. The relations with India are still very testy. That bit has to get addressed, but I think as long as Pakistan... Every other word is Kashmir, Freedom Fighters, and self determination. I don't think Pakistan will ever reach its full potential. I think it's a real problem for them.

Q: During your time there, 1998 to 2001 period, did you find that there had been that traditional clientitis between our ambassadors and embassies, and Pakistan, as opposed

to the ones in India? And that sometimes the ambassador would over identify with his country, where he was assigned? Did that happen during your time, or not?

USREY: There have been some mighty battles in the cable traffic back and forth, then followed by Washington and New Delhi, for sure. This was mostly over Kashmir. It's a complex issue that two intelligent people can be violently in disagreement on. India looks at it and it has been settled, next question. We control the thing, but it's Indian territory, and to acknowledge that we can't have a predominantly Islamic state within our federal government means that the notion of a secular India is bogus. The fact is though that there are UN resolutions on Kashmir and other unfulfilled promises that have not been addressed. My own view is that India is the greater country, the stronger democracy, and it will have to stop reacting to Pakistan. India needs to say, “Look, we're ready for the world stage and we're going to show some leadership.” Prime Minister Vajpayee did that by going to Lahore in 1999, and then they had the Kargil incident where Pakistan invaded Indian-controlled Kashmir and seized a piece of territory, and were kicked out. Every time there is a glimmer of hope, or the Indians exercise some leadership, something stupid happens on the other side. India has a real democracy and a weak coalition. Vajpayee is head of it. But if he appears to be soft on Pakistan, he could be in political danger.

Q: Looking at the map of India, did you see this as a country that is unified, and can have a regular political life or were there fissures there that troubled us?

USREY: In my view, there were two big things that were main impediments to India really moving ahead. One is, I do think that the caste system, although legally outlawed, is very hard to change. Five thousand years of embedded social history is not erased. That operates to their huge disadvantage. If nothing else, it's economically inefficient to have... If you look at the 60 Minutes piece on the caste system, you see untouchables are walking along the road, passing some Brahmins under a tree, and taking their shoes off and walking barefoot past the tree. That sort of thing just doesn't work in a globalized, 21st century economy. That's not the way to get to the top. I think it causes social problems and

social tension and violence. It also is highly inefficient. It keeps a big class of people down. They are illiterate and they shouldn't be.

The second problem, I think, is that India has not been able to take really creative, dramatic policy initiatives on Kashmir. It took one on nuclear weapons, but it was in the wrong direction, to satisfy largely the BJP, the Hindu nationalist element. But, they have a festering border. For a country that wants to go into the security council, they have a lot of unresolved border issues. China controls Aksai Chin. Although the two countries discuss this bilaterally, the talks don't go anywhere. They had a huge fighting war with Pakistan all over control over Kashmir. There are problems with Burma, I believe, in the east, too. This is not a hallmark of a world power. However, it is a democracy that you have to admire. It's very good, but it has this multiplicity of parties that makes it very hard... Ever since Congress went down as the majority party, and now they have these coalitions, it's hard for the prime minister to say that he is going to do something a certain way, Roosevelt style, initiative. They will fall. So, whatever reason, whether it's timidity or a domestic straight jacket or both or what, India needs to step out and take some of the great steps that it really is destined to fulfill. This is a country with a great moral standing and a bright future, but those two things, I think, really hold India down.

Q: You were there and had a good look at this Hindu nationalist thing, the BJP...

USREY: There's the BJP, a political party. Then there is a more militant group that Vajpayee is not a member of, whose purpose is to protect the Hindu “identity” of India. India has had Christians in the south since the second century. It's the second largest Muslim country in the world, after Indonesia. They have more than 120 million Muslims. They also have 800 million Hindus. They have lots of Buddhists, and others. It should be proud of its secular and diverse population, and yet there is a group that thinks it should return to the symbols and the culture of a pure Hindu state. It probably never existed.

Q: You have people going off to build temples, shouting about thgreat God Ram.

USREY: The tridents, the ancient symbol of Hinduism. There are more than one million Hindu gods. It's a very complicated religion. I think part of Hindu nationalism is fueled by the conflict with Pakistan. I think if India could get around this Kashmir business, most Indians want to move on and have a better standard of living.

Q: I always think of the Kashmir thing as that nice little president left by Nehru. He had a connection there. It didn't need to have happened.

USREY: It could have been solved much more easily earlier. Now, since the armed insurrection in Kashmir, which has been going on 12 years now, it makes it very, very difficult. But, even with Kashmir, the biggest problems are the inability to take really radical, creative policy decisions. One of them could be Kashmir.

Q: There's been something that has been around with American-Indian relations for a long time. That is, Americans and Indians don't, on an official level, really talk well together. We look upon it as they are a very difficult people to deal with. I'm sure the Indians look upon us the same way. We're both moralistic. Had that changed, do you think, by the time you were there?

USREY: I think it is changing. I think there are certain countries with which we have a longstanding rivalry relationship. Mexico is one. It's very hard to deal with the Mexican foreign ministry. The French are another. Maybe the Indians are another country like that. India has a point. They say, “What the hell is Britain? A former colonial power, joining the UN Security Council. We are a billion people. We are the biggest democracy.” We should be on the Council. They have a point.

Q: Well, do we have any stand on that?

USREY: I'm not privy to the latest thinking. But, our view has been that we adopted the rather elegant formulation that, “Look, we support a modest expansion of the Council. You can make the Security Council too big. It can't be efficient, if it's too big.” I think

we'll go up to 21 members. It's 15 now. We support, specifically, Germany and Japan as permanent members, our two former enemies in World War II. They are the second and third largest economies in the world, and great democracies now. So, we support them. With respect to other countries, we believe the best way to address that is for the regional groups, the African group, and the Asian group, the Latin American group, to put forward candidacies. Once they decide who their candidate will be, then the U.S. would take a stand on the merits of each candidate. Pakistan and India are never going to decide in the Asia group who is going to be the candidate. I don't think that Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa will agree from the African group. Brazil, Argentina and Mexico won't agree either probably. That is a policy that really isn't a policy. What Clinton said on his visit in 2000, I remember very clearly, after the Indians raised it, he said, “I think India would be an excellent candidate.” You can either say that that says nothing or it says a lot. That is our view on it. We're very careful.

You asked me about whether we have a hard time talking with the Indians. I can point to a single event that began to change this. That was, India always rejected any intervention from the outside to solve any of its problems, like Kashmir, specifically Kashmir, which no one should touch, except the Pakistanis and Indians. Then, there was the Kargil invasion of May 1999, where 800 or so, probably Pakistani backed militants, went over the line, and occupied a strategic height, above Kargil. It sort of became India's Vietnam. They pushed them out and Indians saw real-time coverage of the war on TV, with body bags and everything. It became a big deal. Clinton got Sharif in the Blair House July 4,1999, for an entire day. He spent the whole day with him. Sharif was convinced to pull his troops back, at a great cost, since he was overthrown later. He did it. I think the Indians saw for the first time, maybe that U.S. involvement can be beneficial to them on an issue like Kashmir. That it isn't a bad thing, by definition. I think from them on, we suddenly dropped some of the standard rhetoric and said, “I think we are still building this relationship of trust, but it is changing.” My contacts with the Indians previously involved the usual posturing, as it is with any country. We stated our views and they stated theirs. No longer were we talking

past each other. We were able to say, “What do you really think?” The underlying policy messages were that we are behind a greatly improved U.S.-India relationship, so how do we get there? I'm not just saying that, I do think it is changing.

Q: This is probably a good place to stop.

USREY: Okay.

Q: I take it you left in...

USREY: In January, after the election of 2000, we lost our assistant secretary. All the political appointees left. So, the number two in the bureau, Al Eastham, was moved up to acting secretary. Until my retirement, I was acting DAS for about six, seven months. I worked on many of the same issues. I was more involved with Pakistan. Not yet Afghanistan. I continued to do that until my retirement. Then, I went up to New York last fall during the UNGA, the General Assembly, for three months, to be the senior area advisor on South Asia at the UN. That was that. So, now I am a free man.

Q: This is the last thing. Were there any issues that you dealt with on the South Asia side and the UN? Well, I suppose the post-September 11th...

USREY: To answer the question, I'll tell you when I got to New York. I arrived in New York in the evening, with a full suitcase on September 9th. I reported for work by going to a little orientation they had started for the area advisors, with Rich Brown, Joan Plaisted, and other people who were up there, Larry Pope. Do you know Larry?

Q: I know Larry. We were Saigon together.

USREY: He's a great guy. We had a good time together. They said, “We'll see you back tomorrow.” This was on the 10th. We were headed to a staff meeting on the morning of the 11th. Then Bill Marsh said, “Some guy just hit the tower with a plane.” I had this mental image of a Piper Club bouncing off one of the trade towers. Then, the second one hit.

Ambassador Negroponte hadn't arrived yet. Jim Cunningham said, “Let's get out of here.” They closed the mission thinking the UN building itself might be a target, given there were soon going to be planes going down all over the place. That was the next good target, and we might go down with it. Do you remember the movie, “On the Beach?”

Q: Yes.

USREY: I walked up First Avenue. You could walk down the middle of the road. It was surreal. Behind you, to your south, you had this gigantic plume of smoke going out to sea, with the north breeze. Bridges had been closed except to pedestrian traffic, so you had hundreds of thousands of people, in sort of orderly confusion, being herded over the Queensboro Bridge into Queens. It was this surreal thing. I tried to go give blood at Sloan Kettering. They were only taking type O, and I have A positive. They didn't need my blood, so they sent me away. I went and bought a disposable camera at one of the drugstores and started snapping pictures in Manhattan. I just walked around for about five hours. Then, I went and got a couple of stiff drinks. The next day, the Security Council and General Assembly both passed resolutions condemning the attacks unanimously, calling for international cooperation to counter terrorism. That's all I did for the next three months, on Afghanistan, counter terrorism.

Q: How did our delegation feel about going into Afghanistan? Wathere any question about this? About what we should do?

USREY: No, it was remarkable up there. The so-called general debate, which is a few days when all the heads of state come, was postponed because of the attacks. It was supposed to have been the 18thof September. That was pushed back into late October, I think. After the attacks, the sentiment was overwhelmingly pro-U.S. Even later, when people made statements on other issues, they were careful. Even Iraq and Cuba were guarded in their main statements. It was amazing to see the lack of any opposition to anything we wanted to get done. The Resolution 1368, 1373 that formed this counter

terrorism committee that Ted McNamara is now working on, running full tail, trying to compile a database on countries' track records on fighting terrorism... It is very interesting. It's backbreaking. It was remarkable how much stuff got done up there on account of terrorism. I don't know how it is now. I would suspect that it is a more ragged scene now. With the Middle East now having clouded the picture. But, right then, you could hear a pin drop if someone had said, “Does anyone have any objection to what the Americans are doing?” The Korean president of the General Assembly... Is it Hun? The foreign minister? He was tough on the terrorists. He said that this was a savage attack, and that it was barbaric. He said that we should bomb them. There was a lot more hostile and war like rhetoric going on from other delegations. Everyone knew what we were going to do, when we heard the president speak a few days later in Congress. That was a good speech he made. It was clear where we were headed. People were saying, “It's about time.” That was remarkable. Once they had the Afghan pledging conferences and all that stuff, it was, “Okay, where's the money?” There were issues of a follow-through. But, in terms of overall policy, you couldn't have heard a more unanimous city.

Q: Did the Taliban regime in Afghanistan have representation in thUN?

USREY: They did have a guy there, who if we needed to see him, we could see him at a low level. After September 11th, of course, and even before September 11th, we had heard that the regime in Kabul was finding him more expensive than he was worth. We didn't have relations with the Taliban. The UN recognized the Rabani faction. They had a guy there who sat behind the sign. So, the Taliban wasn't the one in the hall, but they had an office up there. He departed. That office no longer operates. I can't remember if his departure predated September 11th. It was going to happen anyway. So, that was an interesting way to end up.

Q: Okay, Gary, I thank you very much.

USREY: Okay.

End of interview